
CHAPTER VI.

A REGIONAL SURVEY OF VILLAGE SERVICE SYSTEMS

6.1.0 Regional Adaptations and Transformation in the Village Service Systems:

In the earlier chapter we delineated two service systems so far identified, namely the community maintained “demiurgic” service system and the Jajmani system. The much discussed Jajmani system in fact turns out to be a regional system though it is claimed to be Pan- Indian and of great antiquity, it is of a later origin in the late 19th century. “Disguised by the contemporary use of the term Jajmani, it is incorrect to assume that there ever was a uniform village economic system of the type conventionally labeled “Jajmani” existing at any time, present or past.” On the other hand historically, the community maintained demiurgic village service system evolved and adopted as a pan- Indian model in the structural design of village India is of great antiquity, with all its regional variants. Since a particular type of service system can occur only under particular historical circumstances, the conventional anthropological view has presumed ahistorical uniformity, bypassing all regional differences in ecology, economy and society. In this context Fuller¹ challenges whether Jajmani system is a system at all. He notes that in the Jajmani system “the system so called is neither internally integrated nor isolable from a wider set of exchanges.” He further notes that the evidence certainly shows that in many villages there do exist patron-client relationships labeled as Jajmani and those based on village servant basis, in which customary payments in kind are made. However these relationships and payments can not all be subsumed within a single analytical category and they do not even when taken together define or constitute an integrated system. Sets of Jajmani or village service relations there may be, but Jajmani or village service systems, in the strong sense

1. Misconceiving the grain heap, a critique of the concept of the Indian Jajmani system, in *Money and Morality of Exchange*, ed., J. Parry and M. Bloch, Cambridge University press, reprint 1993, p. 40-41.

of the term, there are not.”

Shorn of all theoretical overtones Jajmani is nothing but a so called system of service contracts hereditarily entered and maintained over generations primarily by land owning families with the service families for the performance of certain duties appropriate to family occupations of the latter, against direct compensation for it by a share in the farm produce given at harvest. As hinted by Pocock² this “service tenure” stands comparable to cultivating tenancy or various forms of labor contracts in agriculture, which are kept outside Jajmani or any village service system, but with this difference that under Jajmani contract, the service right is akin to property right which can be sold, mortgaged, transferred or otherwise disposed. As Mayer³ puts it “the irreducible essence of Jajmani relationship is the exclusive property right possessed by the member of an artisan or servant caste to serve a specific patron family.” The ritual aspects of Jajmani, which are stressed by Pocock and Gould⁴, were secondary and could possibly be carry-overs of the pre-existing village service system.

Before we consider the emergence of the so called Jajmani system as a historical “transformation” from the erstwhile community maintained village service system, let us consider the regional adaptations of the latter system.

6.1.1 Factors Responsible for Regional Differences:

In spite of the Pan-Indian uniformity of the community maintained village service system structurally embedded in the village constitution, there were factors which influenced the nature of the village, the village community and the village service system in different regions of the country. These factors of regionalization have necessitated the adaptation of the historically evolved village service model to suit any given regional situation and have given to it “a local habitation and a name”.

Broadly the basic initial factor responsible for differences between different regions is due to their natural environment and physical resources. While there are areas, which invite village formation, there are others where villages are absent.

2. Notes on Jajmani Relationships, op. cit., and p.81.

3. Inventing Village Tradition... etc., op. cit. p. 360.

4. Hindu Jajmani System: A case of Economic Particularism, South Western Journal of Anthropology, Vol. 14, 1958, pp. 428-37.

While in the great part of the country villages are nucleated, in few restricted places they are dispersed. Besides the topography of land, water resources are highly variable between regions. A second factor is the social and political background of different regions. Since tribal and backward classes form a substantial part of the country's population and they are known historically to live in large concentrations in certain regions, the social structure and background of these regions was found to be materially different from the rest. Similarly the caste system being a regional phenomenon, its structure, composition and hierarchy are found to be different in different regions. There are also a set of differences in the social background arising out of different land tenures historically prevailing in different parts of the country which have an important bearing on the village service system along with the caste system noted earlier. The differences in the political background of different regions have mainly flown from the existence of a large number of princely states. While the political background of these states was very different, between themselves the states differed greatly in their political development and administrative arrangement. These differences being age-old have persisted all along influencing the village, the village community and village institutions such as the village service system.

The above type of difference between regions is to be distinguished from that between the villages even within a relatively homogeneous tract, say a district. This difference shows up because, sometimes the village as a unit has not developed into an organic whole. Besides, the population size of the village and the cultivable land under its command as a unit of agriculture; the caste composition of it particularly in terms of functional \ service castes and intercaste interdependence; its agrarian structure in terms of land tenure and tenancy and its hierarchy in the village in terms of owner cultivators, tenant cultivators, share croppers and hired laborers; the cultivation technology and the social arrangement in terms of division of labor and work pattern for crop cultivation; and the cropping pattern in terms of major crops; - all these aspects in the village economy and society are known to cause variation between villages even within a relatively homogeneous region. This aspect of variation between villages operating a particular regional variant of the community maintained service system, adopted and developed over time, will not be considered here, as we lack village wise data of the 19th century vintage though we have a good number of village studies of the later period when the old service system had broken down and changed along with the decay of the village communities that had maintained them. Even so, these studies do not give adequate

attention to the village service and have more often dubbed it under the catchy terminology of “Jajmani” without considering the appropriateness and applicability.

Earlier writers have emphasized different land tenures that caused marked variation between regions. While India has always been a land of small holdings whether worked by peasant proprietors or cultivating tenants, the rights that peasant possessed over his land were dependant on the nature of his tenure, which varied from region to region. The variety of land tenures in India was rather complex, but the earlier writers have classified them into two broad types, as noted in the earlier chapter. To recapitulate, while the joint or landlord type of villages and the associated village communities prevailed in the Punjab and Uttar Pradesh, the severalty or raiyatwari type of villages with their village communities prevailed in the central and peninsular India. However in certain parts the joint and severalty villages existed side by side in juxtaposition. The severalty type also existed in Bengal and Bihar before the introduction of Permanent Settlement by the colonial government in 1793 AD. In the severalty or raiyatwari tracts there was no single ownership over the whole village and it consisted of a number of independent proprietors. The joint type was further classified into Zamindari or a single landlord village or a co-sharing village with a group of share holding landlords, which had two variants, the Pattidari and Bhaiyachara depending on the nature of the right of inheritance. Where a single landlord owned a village all cultivators and the complement of “village artisans and menials” were his tenants. In the joint co-sharing landlord village the practice differed; in some, the whole cultivation was carried on jointly and there was no definite division in different plots of the different co-sharers; in others such a division of plots existed. Again sometimes the joint landlords with their families worked the whole village, but some times also, they admitted cultivating tenants in the village.

These different land tenures, it has been noted,⁵ “did not make a great deal of difference in the internal constitution of the village”. While different village artisans and servants hereditarily appointed had generally their own plots of land, which they held from the village rent-free or at reduced rental, one of the chief sources of income of these village servants consisted in the fixed share of each year’s produce paid to them by each cultivator. For this they were required to render certain customarily specified services to the body of cultivators. This was

5. Gadgil D. R., *Industrial Evolution of India*, Oxford University Press, Reprinted edition, 1948, p. 59.

the arrangement in cases where the village was a group of independent cultivators i.e. a raiyatwari village. "In the case of landlord villages, the village artisans (and menials) owed special duties to the landlord, but otherwise their position was not greatly different from that of the corresponding classes in the raiyatwari village".

As Baden Powell⁶ also notes, "taking, however the average sized village, there is little in the external appearance to distinguish the joint from the raiyatwari form ... the conditions which attract a group of permanent menials and artisans to serve the village are the same in the raiyatwari village. But with the village officers there is a difference." The common bond holding together the raiyatwari village was the power of the headman and the presence of common hereditarily appointed artisans and servants paid by the village, while in the landlord village it was single or group ownership. This is a very broad generalization, which needs to be scrutinized.

In the pattidari type of joint village where land belonged to descendents of the person whose name the patti adopted, each patti in the village had its own complement of service castes attached to it and not to the whole village as such. Though the joint villages under bhaiyachara system of descent were also later divided into pattis to facilitate the collection of land revenue by the colonial government, the above system of pattidari villages was not applied to the villages in the 'khap' or clan territory. It was recognized that other 'thoks' / 'lineages' in a patti as descendents of the original conquerors or colonizers had equal rights in the residential and agricultural land which they held at the time of partitioning the village into pattis. Even in the bhaiyachara village each patti had its own complement of service castes, though the members could also serve the proprietors of other pattis in the village and were originally supposed to owe allegiance only to the proprietor on whose land they had built their house of residence. Mostly these service castes did serve only the proprietors of their pattis, while the sweepers and the chamars were not allowed to serve outside their patti. Thus the allegiance of service castes of the village service system to their patti proprietor, by virtue of residence on their land and the kinship affinity between patti proprietors provided a feeling of patti solidarity. The complement of patti specific artisans and menials were service tenants of patti landlords.

While it is not necessary to go into further details about land tenures, it is necessary to realize that there was vagueness even in certain essential terms like

6. Indian Village Community (I. V. C.), op. cit., p. 23.

the “zamindar”, who initially was a revenue official under the Mughal administration with certain duties and privileges. Later on a zamindar came to mean anyone having a proprietary right in land in contrast to a raiyat who was a tenant having certain occupancy right in land only. In a more restricted sense any holder of a gift or rent-free land was also referred to as a zamindar. Lands or even whole villages were gifted to certain distinguished persons, kins of the Raja, soldiers, scholars, temples and others. At the village level, in each there were hereditary officials and servants whose services were guaranteed by land grants. Besides some village functionaries like the temple priest, Mullah, Maulavi, and the artisans and the servants in the village service group were given land grants for service to the village community termed as Jagirs, Chakran grants, manyams, Watans, or Inams. This right was heritable and divisible. The point is that, under any system of land tenure, the village communities required certain services, which were secure by land grants to concerned functionaries and servants. As already noted they were given shares of the village produce in certain regions of the country, and both in certain others. A gift land was, however, more valued than grain payments as possession of land meant not only greater security but also greater privilege.

The dues and duties of artisans and servants working hereditarily as village servants differed from one region to another, and also between villages within a relatively homogeneous region. The differences were not only in the grain dues and services, but also in the need-based composition of the complement of artisans and servants who were the servants of the village, for an artisan who would be a village servant in one region would be an independent artisan in another. It is important to note that while artisans and servants hereditarily appointed as village servants were found everywhere, not all village servants were artisans, for this group also included, in many parts, the village headman, the accountant, the priest etc. neither were all artisans village servants. For instance, the weaver was nowhere a village servant, as also the oil presser. But artisans and servants whose services would be regularly required by all members of the village community, generally formed, the village service group.

6.1.2 Temporal Changes Within the Regional System:

Besides the adaptation of the pan-Indian model of community maintained village service system to suit the regional ecology, economy and society, it was not that the system so adopted continued indefinitely without any temporal changes within the region. The changes do occur due to changes in the agrarian

organization of production and labor relations. Sheer growth of population will introduce changes. The villages that were mere hamlets at one time begin, with the growth of population, to require whole-time artisans and servants for themselves, whereas before, two small hamlets were satisfied with the services of one set. Further with the growth of the village having its own set of service professionals, may find its complement of different types of them, insufficient to cater to the increase in demand for the services, with the growth of population. Under such a situation, besides the original family of the permanently appointed hereditary servant, temporary servants (Upari \ pahi) may be allowed to meet the demand. The latter are naturally entitled to receive remuneration so long as they worked in the village.

Besides the demographic changes, the development of irrigation and consequent changes in the cropping pattern, over time in once dry villages within a region, for instance introduce far reaching changes in the agrarian structure of production and labor relations giving rise to changes in the agrarian hierarchy. Irrigation produces greater wealth to sustain not only more people who labor but a concentration of people whose work comprises management and related tasks as also increased volume of work for service professionals, as well as many who do no agricultural work at all. The last applies to those of land holding higher castes, who turn into rent receivers leasing out their lands and thus changing the tenurial status pattern of cultivation. In canal irrigated area, the water overseer (nirganti) becomes a regular village servant. In well-irrigated area, the blacksmith, the potter and the leather worker whose volume of work for maintaining the irrigation equipment increases. In sugarcane growing villages, the maintenance of cane press also adds to the volume of work of the blacksmith, besides his routine work of making and mending agricultural implements. Thus the staff of professional servants changes at the village level, as and when need arises and the economy finds that it can carry extra load, due to such changes so as to make the village community more self-sufficient.

While the service system was intra-village and the rules of the system required that services be dispensed by village servants to all land owners and to all other village servants to the extent that it was practicable, important modifications in the services were brought about by caste regulations. The service system had to accommodate to the caste, if it was to persist.

But these and other such changes with their impact on the village service

system are to be distinguished from the temporal changes within the village service itself. and these pertain to the schedule of duties and dues of the village servants, about which we do not get any diachronic data. As regards such changes it may be noted that the duties got standardized and got classified in to public duties (Gaonki) and private caste-profession duties (Gharki) rendered to the villagers. As regards dues, the different modes of payment of remuneration for public services corresponded to the system of payment of land revenue in different regions, under different regimes and changed overtime according to state policy. The first method corresponded to the “Batai” system where the customary shares of different categories of village servants were paid from the village grain heap. The second system was in the line of the system where each peasant paid a certain fixed amount of his produce to the state. In this case the village headman, after inspecting the state of harvest got every peasant pay a certain portion of his produce to each category of village servant. The third system came about when the revenue was paid in cash in this case when the government share of the crop was commuted to cash and cash recovered from the peasant, the fixed portion of the crop paid as remuneration to the village servants was normally in kind according to the second method, on the threshing floor. Pure cash payment to village servants was rare even in the case when land revenue was fixed in cash without any reference to the produce.

However, as in the last case, when the land revenue and the rents got delinked and monetized, the remuneration dues of the village artisans and servants, which were originally customary shares in the grain heap, also got delinked and were redefined as fixed quantities of grain to be paid at harvest time, without any reference to the size of the harvest. Since services were need-based, both the peasant as well as the village servant accepted the changed situation. Thus, the system of payment of fixed quantities of grain continued to co-exist with the market forces. This situation has been described as a dual economy in which the closed traditional village service system with non-market transactions in kind came to co-exist with an open market-oriented cash economy, in other spheres within the village.

What we get in the gazetteers and other sources is data synchronically collected at the time of their compilation with no historical information. Even so reporting therein variously in terms such as “customary duties”, “customary dues”, “customary contribution”, “customary or regular share”, “traditional huk or dues”, “customarily fixed quantity of grain”, “customary wages” etc. makes it vague, where what is “custom” is not explicitly stated. “Customary” or “traditional” is a broad

descriptive term which refers neither to a specific period nor to a specific social structure, but to a type of social organization which experienced little or no change for many generations and in which there was a wide spread tendency to legitimate actions by reference to their having occurred in the past. Redefinition of the 'customary' or 'traditional' occurs constantly as social organizations respond to changing circumstances. Since the reporting in terms of 'customary' duties and dues etc., has confounded any change that has occurred, for in any given circumstance custom has got redefined and though the custom has not passed, it has got transformed, like the proverbial plough which gets its plough share replaced once and later its wooden frame made new, but the plough still remains old plough for generations. Further as Harper⁷ notes, "nowhere in the literature is there an analysis of precisely how payments are determined."

Even so, while different district Gazetteers have given some quantitative data in respect of remuneration paid to different artisans and servants, without adequate specification of the work-load put in, we have not attempted to analyze them between districts, let alone between regions, on account of immense problems of comparison, arising out of different units of measurements in which the data are recorded, some times in rates per plough or per head or per household and sometimes in absolute quantities. Also they relate to the different years and seasons and lack specification about different types of grain and grain of varying qualities. To standardize all the reportings for instituting comparisons is indeed a Herculean task of untold outcome.

6.1.3 Transformation of the System:

Since the type of the service system can only occur under particular historical circumstances in the village economy and society, transformation, as distinguished from any temporal change within the system, implies change from one type of service system to another, in particular from the community maintained village service system to that of the privatized dyadic (family to family) relations of the so called Jajmani or vice versa. Besides the well known example of such transformation in U.P by Peter Mayer⁸ which we will discuss in sequel, Fuller⁹

7. Two Systems of Economic Exchange in Village India, American Anthropologist, Vol. LXI, No. 5., pt. 1, 1959, p. 746.

8. Inventing Village Tradition etc. op.cit. pp. 357-395.

9. Misconceiving Grain heap, op.cit., p. 38.

has quoted the historical evidence of medieval south-India (Tamilnadu) as narrated by Burton Stein¹⁰ “Stein shows that the village officers and servants (Ayagar, Kannada equivalent of Marathi balutedar¹¹) appear to have been paid by dominant patron peasants in earlier times, but later received specified income shares in granted land grain or cash from the village as a whole”¹². As Stein¹³ writes, “what is distinctive about Ayagar system is not that the complement of skills and services existed in villages of the Vijayanagara period but, that special allotments of income shares from land, specified cash payments were for the first time generally provided for those holding these offices.” Noting that besides the village administrative offices, there were carpenters, smiths, persons responsible for the regulation and maintenance of irrigation channels and village tanks vital to the agricultural economy, just as there were priests and washermen required for ritual purity, he writes, “livelihood shares of village income for these services are first mentioned in Vijayanagar records. It can only be assumed that payment for such services in pre-Vijayanagara times was provided informally by the Nattar patrons of the village and locality to these specialized clients. Whether the transformation of such payments from informal, essentially patron-client ones, to public provisions of specified income shares resulted from the demand of village servants, whose bargaining position may have improved with the decline in the power of the Nadu or the convenience of village patrons cannot be judged. The implication of either origin of change are interesting but the shift to this more formal, tenurial mode of payment underscores the transformation from anonymous, organic relationships of the Chola period to more stratified and complex relationships later.”

While Stein has linked this change to increased administrative penetration of the villages under Vijayanagara rule, Baker¹⁴ repeating Stein’s interpretation notes that the village officers and servants were actually appointed by warrior chiefs, which was earlier stated by Mahalingam¹⁵ and once appointed, these Ayagaras had

10. Peasant State and Society in Mediaeval South India, Oxford University Press, Delhi, 1980, pp. 424-25.

11. Wilson, a Glossary of Judicial and Revenue terms, 1855, p.41.

12. Fuller, *ibid.*, p. 38.

13. Peasant State and Society..., *Ibid.*

14. An Indian Rural Economy; 1880-1955, The Tamilnad Countryside, Oxford University Press, Delhi, 1984, pp. 40-41, 47, 53-57.

15. Administration and Social Life Under Vijayanagara, University of Madras, 1940, p. 218-219.

a hereditary right over their offices. Baker distinguishes Stein's blanket argument between the plains region and the valley region. Narrating the history he notes that during the Vijayanagar period(c 1350-1564 A.D) the mobilization of dry plains territory for recruitment of military forces and expanding agriculture was achieved by setting up warrior chiefs as viceroys- Nayakas or Palaigars, who appointed the headmen to organize other inhabitants for production. Further there was a greater degree of intervention by the state via Palaigars in the business of agriculture than had ever seen before. The state took a considerable role in organizing within a village basic services to sustain village production. It appointed various ancillary workers in the villages- irrigation overseers, guards, priests, washermen, blacksmiths, carpenters, potters and so on-and provided them with special grants of land and – or doles of paddy for their support. This was an improvement as the previous states had rewarded village headman and other village officers and artisans by granting them pieces of land and discounting their revenue liability. Baker's point on the other hand, that there was no strong tradition of village office in the wet valley region, has also been noted by David Ludden¹⁶ in his Tirunenveli study who writes that "unlike the situation in the dry zone the village office did not become a base for power in the wet zone in centuries before 1800... There developed no tradition of wet zone headman, their functions were served rather by leading Mirasdars. Accountants and watchmen did not enjoy substantial tax free holdings, they relied rather on shares of the harvest from Mirasdars whose servants they were understood to be." The Mirasdars with their own complex institutionalization of sabhas to manage individual villages had in the past managed to forestall government attempts to place in the village its own village officials who would inevitably compromise their own claims to absolute control. The valley villages were divided into two exclusive sections- the privileged corporations of Brahmins and Vellala "kaniyatchikarans", and outcaste laborers who were usually Pallans and parayans. As Ludden notes, "indeed Mirasdars were the government in the wet zone not only at the village level, they and their caste stratum peers comprised the sub regional power."

Ignoring the historiographic disagreement Fuller notes that " the key point is the alteration in response to external political pressure," from the so-called Jajmani like patron-client system to the village service system of Ayagaras in Tamilnadu.

16. Peasant History in South India, Oxford University Press, Delhi, 1989, p. 90.

The third illustration of system change or transformation, in most parts of the country is due to the decay and disappearance of the old village community whereby the community maintained village service system lost legal and other forms of support and degenerated and got “privatized” and individual artisans and servants served individual families in the village in a dyadic attachment giving rise to Jajmani like relations. The changes brought about by the colonial government through its land revenue policy and the structure of the village establishment as the administrative officials played no small role in the above transformation from the community maintained village service system to the so called Jajmani system. In this regard Fuller has quoted the example of Gough’s¹⁷ Thanjavur village, where such transformation appears to have occurred in the early 19th century when, “the British made most village servants the private responsibility of the landlords.” Fukazawa¹⁸ referring to similar transformation to the dyadic tenure of the Jajmani system notes that “ during the British period the territorial social group called village was greatly disorganized or disintegrated so that village servants were transformed into family servants”. He has given an illustration towards similar change in respect of Gujrat sharehold villages and notes that the “trend of destroying the territorial solidarity of village, loosened the jointness of the village so that the village servants came to be divided among the major divisions of the village.” Quoting about systems in Andhra-Pradesh and Tamil-Nadu, Peter Mayer¹⁹ notes that “ although in many instances these village services were converted to an individual ‘fee for service’ basis during the 19th century, some of them persist into the present or survived recently”. Elsewhere in this chapter, our study of Bengal presents a similar illustration of degeneration of the community maintained village service system and privatization of services.

6.1.4. Some Regional Profiles of Village Service System.

A word of explanation about our use of the term “system” is necessary. Beidelman²⁰ complained that the early studies, all failed to see the incorporation

17. Rural Society in Southeast India, Cambridge University Press, Cambridge, 1981, p.204, 181-3, 204-6, 265, 85 as quoted by Fuller, op.cit., p.38.

18. Rural Servants in the 18th century Maharashtrian Village-Demiurgic or Jajmani system, Hitotsubashi Journal of Economics Vol. 12, No. 2, p. 40. Also Structure and Change of the Sharehold Village, Hitotsubashi Journal of Economics. Vol.14, No.2, 1974, p.28.

19. Inventing Village Tradition... etc., op.cit. p. 364.

20. A comparative analysis of the jajmani system, op.cit., p. 4.

of division of labor in terms of services by non-agricultural caste specialists to agricultural and other castes embedded in the village organization as a “system” but saw it “only as a series of acts or payments”. Earlier, while this ‘communal agency’ was completely linked to the village “administrative agency”, so much so that the two together were described in early literature as “village establishment” embedded in the village constitution, there was, therefore, no need for early writers to look at it as a separate system. They were all “village officers”. In view of this, what we get is a listing of duties (‘acts’) and dues (‘payments’) and the “system” by implication was the “village service system” defined for the village as a whole.

As regards “system”, Oscar Lewis²¹ noted that “it is greatly to the Wiser’s credit that he was able to characterize Jajmani relations as a system”. On this judgment Fuller²² commented that “nothing has promoted more misinterpretation than Wiser’s ostensible break-through” as according to him, the Jajmani system is not a system in the full sense of the term and is not fully integrated and isolable as sets of “Jajmani” and “village service” relations are found to co-exist in villages which we have noted earlier. However, so far as we are concerned our usage of the term is based on the dictionary meaning of the term “system” as “a group of things or parts working together in a regular relation in an integrated fashion.”

But we have omitted the administrative component²³ of the village establishment from our consideration, because of its growing linkage, historically more with the government than with the village community, which ultimately turned out into a government, appointed body during the colonial regime. When the village became a fiscal unit of the government, the administrative unit became the revenue collecting agency and a body to maintain law and order in the village on behalf of the government. The administrative unit was singled out as “village officers” leaving the rest of the village establishment as the “communal agency” comprising the service group of artisans and menials. It was this latter group which got continued support of the village community as constituting the village service group, to meet its

21. Village Life in Northern India, Urbana, University of Illinois Press, 1958, pp.55-56.

22. Misconceiving the Grain heap etc., op.cit., p. 39.

23. Matthai John, studied this component in his book, Village government in British India, London T. Fisher Unwin Ltd., 1915.

needs. However, as pointed out by A.C. Mayer²⁴ services for payment in kind were partly performed for the cultivators and were partly village service such as the maintenance of the priest, the temple keeper, the drummer, the sweeper, the gosain, the bairagi etc. the village cultivators who constituted the largest majority group of service users in the village community, in a sense, paid for the entire village community directly or indirectly from their grain produce at harvest. In this sense, the village servants were more the servants of cultivators than of other villagers in the community. But services were performed for every villager in the community according to his requirements. Further, the village servants also participated in all public functions or festivals in the village; infact each one of them had a specific role to play on such occasions.

In the succeeding sections of this rather exasperatingly lengthy chapter we present some typical studies of village service systems from different regions of the country, illustrating the regional adaptation of the pan-Indian model of community maintained village service system and its modifications to suit the regional needs. For, our purpose, we have adopted the existing states as macro-regions and have not attempted to define a separate system of regions by splitting the district and provincial level data available to us in the earlier censuses, Gazetteers and others. Wherever necessary we have pointed out the sub regions within the macro regions.

As regards the nomenclature of different regional systems, the traditional practice seems to be to name them after the village servants as a group, for e.g. Sepidars, Pauniya, Vasavya, Balutedars, Ayagars, Panivallu etc. Since all these were maintained by the village community it was not at all named after service receivers' group which was non descript, amorphous body of villagers. The Jajmani system, which is an exception to this norm, assumes a master servant dyadic relationship between the service receiving Jajman and service rendering Parijan or Kamina and as such gets named after the master Jajman. Miller's Asami system for the Central Provinces (M.P.) follows the same modern practice. However in most of the village service systems of different regions, the "master" was the corporate body, the village community.

24. Caste and Kinship in Central India. Allied Publishers Pvt. Ltd., Routledge and Kegan Paul, London, 1960, p.71.

6.2.0. The “village service system” and emergence of Jajmani system in Uttar Pradesh.

The following study of Uttar Pradesh, which contained, mostly joint landlord villages, discusses the pre-existing “village service system” of “artisans and menials” and its transformation to Jajmani system in the late 19th century.

6.2.1 The pre-existing “village service system”.

The villages in Uttar Pradesh, formerly known as Northwest province and Oudh \ United provinces of Agra and Oudh, were a mix of zamindari, joint zamindari and Mukadami villages of severalty type. While in respect of joint village the division of it into Pattis of co-sharers to facilitate revenue collection and the assignment of service staff of “artisans and menials” to different Pattis was a later period development during the early colonial regime, the villages of pre-British period had no different constitution and did not differ from others in respect of the village service system as such, except for the fact that the service staff had to work a little more for the zamindar. The village had a whole array of artisans and menials either found by the zamindars instituted at the time of its foundation in their domain or brought and settled by them in the village they newly founded. Though appointed and retained by the zamindars they were all demiurgically employed on hereditary basis to serve the village community which was defined for the landlords and the rest, particularly the village service staff were all “strangers within the gate” and were “servants of the village”.

The Lucknow District Article of the Oudh Gazetteer (1877)²⁵ for e.g. noted that “the zamindar found the cultivator of soil in his domain or brought him to the village and settled him, gave him land to cultivate and a house to live in.” The houses were all his property and went with the land. So long as the occupant cultivated the land and paid the rent he demanded no other hire. But from the non-agriculturist class he took “Parjawat”. The house site, the timber land and village pasture being the property of the zamindars, the villagers had to pay a price for the utilization or Parjawat as it was called, which varied from ceremonial gifts and offerings to regular payments of rent in cash or kind. The functionary castes, artisans and menials, shopkeepers and merchants used to pay in terms of services and other gifts. For example, if they were manufacturers who took their ware to

25. Vol. II, pp. 317-318, also the District Gazetteer of Lucknow, ed. Neville, vol. XXXVII, 1904, pp. 103-104.

other markets, he took money. If they were village artisans who worked for the inhabitants of the village, he took in kind. As for the Julahas and Binhas (weavers and cotton carders), he took a small sum of money (Kargaha) but from Chamars, he took a pair of shoes a year and his cattle gear made and repaired. From the village carpenter he took a plough in the year and got his implements mended for nothing. From Gadariya (shepherd) he got a blanket per year. The District Gazetteer of Lucknow (1904) further noted that the “zamindars still reckons the cultivators among his goods and chattel and includes them in a transfer of his domain. The idea is a relic of the past when the zamindar colonized and settled the cultivator giving him land to cultivate and collected Parjawat from non-agricultural classes. This annual tribute was continued to be paid and the people did not object to it.”

To document further evidence, J.C. Nesfield’s “Brief view of the caste system of the North Western Provinces and Oudh (1885)²⁶” which was based on the census of 1882 notes the latter’s enumeration of the staff of the “village establishment” as “Municipal and self-sufficing village body” comprising the Chowkidar, Chamar, Kumhar, Dhobi and Bhangi who received a stipulated portion of the produce of the two annual harvests. In respect of artisans, the Barhai and the Lohar, Nesfield noted that they are “public servants” and no village will be complete which did not contain one or more such functionaries with its circle. But he distinguishes these two artisans from brass workers (Kasera), goldsmith (Sonar) and glass worker (Manihar) who have no place in the staff of the village community similar to that held by Lohar and Barhai.

Nesfield’s characterization of artisans as public servants of all cultivators of village is echoed and amplified by T. Morrison²⁷ in his book on U.P. “The Industrial Organization of an Indian Province” (1918) who notes village servants, conceived by the tradition as being “in the joint service of the whole village” and “the artisan, the casual laborer, and the village servants are all placed in the same category, because they are all looked upon as employed by the village...”

On the basis of further evidence by William Crooke (1888) in his writings, the statements of revenue settlement reports and the writing of Rose H.A., Hunter and Russell, Mayer²⁸ observes that “what emerges consistently and clearly from

26. Govt. of NWP. and Oudh, Allahabad, 1885, pp.24-29.

27. John Murray, London, 1918, p. 197-98.

28. Inventing village tradition, The late 19th century origins of the North Indian “Jajmani system”, *Modern Asian Studies* 1993, vol. 27, no.2, pp. 373-374.

these accounts of the relation between village cultivator and artisan is that the system which prevailed widely in north India, at least until the second half of the 19th century, was one in which the artisans and others like Chamars had general obligations of service to the entire class of village land holders and were compensated for those services by all cultivators either directly by payment at harvest time, or indirectly through grants of village land". He further observes that these individuals inherited these service relations from father to son and there is no evidence that "they were either contracted on a dyadic basis or that they as could be mortgaged or otherwise disposed off by the individual possessing them, as they clearly could be by the early 20th century."

The above findings justify the characterization of artisans and menials as "village servants" maintained by the zamindari villages and for the village community, which one consistently finds described as "village menials" in the 19th century records. In Max Weber's terminology we have described them as "demiurgic" and were different from those with "the salable dyadic bond between cultivator and artisan which characterizes the Jajmani system" like that between a Brahmin Purohit and his Jajman. Even so, the distinguishing feature of the north Indian "village service system" of artisans and menials was that it differed from the south Indian village service system, where for e.g. Mirasi or Baluta rights could be alienated.

6.2.2 Types of Village Artisans and Servants:

We will consider below the different types of artisans and servants functioning as "village servants" in U.P.

As the Pratabgarh District Gazetteer²⁹ noted, "every Bania, Behana, Kumhar, and Nai had plots of land and the same may be said of village officials, viz. The Patwari and the Chaukidar. Almost the whole of Parja or village servants received small grants of land from the zamindar in addition to doles of grain given at each harvest. The Kahar, Dhobi and Darzi received from 5 Biswa to 2 Bighas of rent free land and Nai and Chamar were also allowed small plots not exceeding one Bigha." In view of this situation, it was difficult, if not impossible to divide the village population exactly between agriculturist and non-agriculturist. Except in towns, all artisans and servants, traders and others, cultivated their small patches of land. Very often the usual custom that village craftsmen and servants receive

29. Ed. Neville, vol. XLVIII, p.76. While Biswa was 1/20th Bigha, the later varied from place to place. Bigha in NWP was 5/8th of an acre.

small piece of land in return for services at low rent or even merely nominal rent was extensively practiced to the above State was added the confusion likely to be created between the village servants of the village establishment and the Zamindars' servants in the village other than the former, so much so that it was difficult to identify on ground who is who, as both sets were under the employ of the zamindars. In view of this an exclusive and exhaustive listing of village artisans and servants is not to be found in the Gazetteers, though such a one may have been there in the village paper, Wazib-ul-urz for each village. Further the number and different types of artisans and menials was not fixed, it seems, even normatively by custom as elsewhere for e.g. Bara Balutas in Maharashtra. Hence it is necessary to find out, who these village artisans and menials were in the village service system.

In the following table no. 6.2.2 (1) we have presented lists of different artisans and servants in U.P. While the first list is due to Elliot (1869) drawn from his list of castes, whom he terms as professions rather than castes. The second and third are lists for North Western Provinces (NWP), and Oudh as compiled by us from different Gazetteers of U.P. available to us (1877-1878, 1908-1911). The list by Misra is for U.P. as a whole and is undated. While Misra has noted that his list may not be exhaustive, it includes practically all important village servants. Elliot's list is not of village servants as such, but is a list of different non-agricultural professions found in the villages in North Western Provinces (NWP). Misra includes in the term village servants all those "workers who are employed temporarily or permanently on remuneration paid in cash or kind by village people to serve the latter collectively or individually". The term, therefore is wider and differs from the concept of the traditional village servant permanently employed on hereditary basis and remunerated at harvests from the grain heap.

However Misra's list of village servants whose wages are customarily fixed in kind and paid at each harvest is pretty small and is probably illustrative. It comprises 1. The Lohar 2. Nai 3. Kahar 4. Dhobi 5. Bahngi 6. Gorait \ Rakhawa 7. Pahari. Misra has further listed the village servants who receive grain and gifts on special occasions they, are :

1. Purohit	5. Mali	9. Bhangi	13. Sonar
2. Nai	6. Manihar	10. Darzi	14. Chamar
3. Kahar	7. Dhobi	11. Barhai	
4. Bari	8. Kumhar	12. Lohar	

Table 6.2.2 (1): Village Servants in United Provinces.

Elliot's list of professions.	Lists derived from NWP		Oudh		Misra's list for U.P.
	NWP		Oudh		
1. Barhai.	1. Barhai.		1. Barhai.		1. Barhai.(2)
2. Lohar.	2. Lohar.		2. Lohar.		2. Lohar.(1)(2)
3. Kumhar.	3. Kumhar.		3. Kumhar.		3. Kumhar. (2)
4. (Ahir)*	4. Ahir.		4. Ahir.		4. -
4a. Gadaria.	4a. Gadaria.		4a. Gadaria.		4a. -
5. Nai.	5. Nai.		5. Nai.		5. Nai. (1)(2)
6. Dhobi.	6. Dhobi.		6. Dhobi.		6. Dhobi. (1)(2)
7. Dhimar / Kahar.	7. Kahar / Bihisti.		7. Kahar.		7. Kahar. (1)(2)
8. Chamar.	8. Chamar / Mochi.		8. Chamar.		8. Chamar. (2)
9. (Brahman)*	9. Brahman / Priest.		9. Brahman / Priest / Purohit / Pandit (astrologer).		9. Purohit. (2)
10. -	10. -		10. -		10. Mullah.
11. -	11. Jogi.		11. Faquir / Gosain / Sokha / Guru / Beggar.		11. Gosain.
12. Mehtar.	12. Bhangi.		12. Mehtar.		12. Bhangi. (2)
13. -	13. Watchman / Pahari (Gorait).		13. Watchman.		13. Gorait / Rakhwah / Pahri. (1)
14. Mali.	14. -		14. Mali.		14. Mali. (2)
15. -	15. Bari (messenger).		15. Bari (torchbearer).		15. Bari. (2) (Serving caste).
16. -	16. -		16. Tamboli.		16. -
17. -	17. -		17. Manihar.		17. Manihar. (2)
18. -	18. Darzi.		18. Darzi.		18. Darzi. (2)

Elliot's list of professions.	Lists derived from NWP and Oudh Gazetteers.		Misra's list for U.P.
19. -	19. Julha and Calico Printer.	19. Julha.	19. -
20. -	20. -	20. Binha / Behna.	20. Behna.
21. Bharbhunja.	21. Bharbhunja and Baker.	21. Bharbhunja.	21. Bhujwa.
22. Sonar.	22. Soanr.	22. Sonar.	22. Sonar. (2)
23. -	23. Mason / Stonecutter.	23. Mason.	23. Patwa.
24. -	24. Badi (Musician).	24. Bhat.	24. -
25. Teli.	25. -	25. Teli.	25. -
26. -	26. -	26. Halwai.	26. -
27. -	27. Mallah.	27. Mallah.	27. -
28. Nuniya.	28. -	28. Launiya.	28. -
29. -	29. Weighman.	29. Weighman (Baya).	29. -
30. -	30. Thanait.	30. Chaukidar.	30. -
31. -	31. -	31. Patwari.	31. -
32. Baniya. Lodha. Kalwar.	32. -	32. Baniya.	32. -

Notes: * Separately enumerated as castes and not as professions.

(1) : Those who receive customary grain dues at harvest.

(2) : Those who receive gifts on special occasions such as marriage etc.

Source:

1. Elliot H.M. Memoirs of the Races of northwestern Provinces of India. Vol. I, pp. 182-183.
2. Oudh Gazetteer. 1877-78, reprinted by B. R. publishing Corporation, Delhi, 1985.
3. District Gazetteers of the United Provinces of Agra and Oudh - H. R. Neville's Series (1905-1911).
4. Shridhar Misra, "Earnings of village Servants in U. P." Eastern Anthropologist. Vol. V. Nos. 2 and 3. 1951. p. 96.

Comparing Elliot's NWP list with NWP Gazetteer list, after excluding Bania who is not a village servant and Lodha who is a rice grower, we find that the agreement between the above list is more than 76 %. With respect to Misra's list its agreement with the NWP Gazetteer list is above 75% and with Oudh list it is as large as 94%. Between NWP and Oudh, NWP is smaller by 9 entries and matches the Oudh list by 100%. On the other hand the agreement of Oudh list with NWP list is only 72%. However the nine types of servants missing in the NWP list are not permanent hereditary servants at all and Patwari is a village official.

In table no. 6.2.2. (2) a list as gleaned from the above noted Gazetteer lists, subject to the condition that they hold service land and also receive a share in the grain heap, is given to the "core"³⁰ servants, permanently employed on hereditary basis and remunerated by customarily fixed shares of grain at each harvest. The rest are non-core or peripheral, as most of these operate on commercial basis and their services are occasionally required.

While Mallas are ferriers, Baris are personal attendants, torch bearers and messengers of Zamindars and like Nais, Bari's are also hereditary village servants according to Opler and Singh³¹ But the Oudh Gazetteer (1877)³² noted that the Bari was uncommon except in Talukdari villages and his remuneration was on no fixed scale. The Tamboli (Betel leaf vendor), Manihar (Bangle seller), Halwai (Confectioner) are all petty traders. While Binhas (cotton – carders), Julaha (weavers), Bhadbhooja (grain parcher), Sonar (goldsmith), and Teli (oil presser) work on piece rates, Bhadbhujas retain a certain portion of cereals brought for parching as their service charge like Sonars who also retained a certain portion of metal brought for making ornaments by the customer. Launiyas are salt makers who sell salt and Teli exchanged oil against oil seeds brought by customers. These therefore, are not "village servants" retained on permanent hereditary basis. Though some of these are found in the village establishment list, for e.g. Bari, Tamboli, they are exceptions and retained as such by the Zamindar.

30. For the distinction of "core and peripheral", see Elder J.W. "Rajapur, change in Jajmani system in an Uttar Pradesh village" in *Change and Continuity in India's villages*, Ed. K.Ishwaran, Columbia University Press New York, 1970, p.119.

31. The division of labor in an Indian village, in Carlton Coon, ed., *A Reader in General Anthropology*, New- York, 1948. op.cit., p.

32. op.cit., vol. III, pp. 96-97.

Table No. 6.2.2. (2) Service landholders, Receivers of the share in the grain heap and Core Servants derived from NWP and Oudh lists.

No.	Service Land Holders	Sharers in Grain Heap	Core Servants Derived from Lists.
1.	Barhai	Barhai	Barhai
2.	Lohar	Lohar	Lohar
3.	Kumhar	Kumhar	Kumhar
4.	Ahir	Ahir	Ahir
5.	Nai	Nai	Nai
6.	Dhobi	Dhobi	Dhobi
7.	Kahar \ Bihisti	Kahar	Kahar
8.	Chamar	Chamar	Chamar
9.	Pandit \ Priest	Pandit	Pandit
10.	Faquir \ Gosain	Faquir \ Gosain	Faquir \ Gosain
11.	Bhat	Bhat	Bhat
12.	Darzi	-	Darzi
13.	Gorait	Gorait	Gorait
14.	Mali	Mali	Mali
15.	-	-	Mehtar \ Bhangi

Considering table 6.2.2(2) we note that while Darji enjoyed a small patch of land, he had no fixed grain allowances from tenants on the estate, as noted by Oudh Gazetteer (1877). While Mehtar/Bhangi (sweeper) figure in the core list, they were neither given service land nor share in the grain heap. However, the Oudh Gazetteer (1877) noted that Mehtar was too infrequent and was far too rarely met with amongst the roll of village servants. Where retained and kept, he was “favored with a pittance from two to eight annas a month”. As regards the ploughman, while he got a share in the grain heap, he was more a farm servant rather than a village menial and as such he does not figure in any of lists in the Table.

6.2.3 The Grain Heap and the Grain Dues:

In the old village system, described earlier, the medium of remuneration to village servants was, for the most part “an allocative right”, customary in nature and volume, to a share of the produce on land. In the earlier chapter we have discussed the universal prevalence of the custom of distribution of harvested grain on the threshing floor to the village artisans and servants in to their respective shares, as the first charge on the crop after which remaining grain heap was divided in to the share of the landlord and that of the tenant. In particular we discussed the distribution of the grain heap in the Gonda village in Oudh as depicted by Bennett in his settlement report of 1878 together with Walter Neale’s discussion on it.

The village servants, besides the annual grain allowances at each harvest, also got grants of land as “Birt” by the zamindars, consisting of small patches of land, rent free. While such grants were numerous, this did not mean that every class of village servant got the grant in every village. However, the customary share in the grain heap was regarded by the village servants as their “Khari Haq” and the grain heap as a rule “formed the basis of the whole internal economy of the village and the rights of the several classes were measured by the share of the gross produce of the land, assigned to each by immemorial customs”.³³ In fact, “the entire community had an interest in the grain heap, not only the land owner, the tenant and the ploughman” who were considered as the chief sharers, “but also the village menials, artisans and others who were paid for the various services they rendered to the agriculturist, not in cash but by a fixed allowance at harvest time.”³⁴

The value of their labour was determined by the custom in terms of grain. They were really an “integral part of the complete political system, which has for its basis the grain heap on the threshing floor and took their place more correctly with the Raja, the village proprietors and the tillers of the soil than with the trading classes.”³⁵ “Each individual class, the Barber as much as the Raja formed an essential part of the whole unit of property and the absence of any one member would leave a share of the produce unappropriated to which no one could advance

33. Oudh Gazetteer, 1876-1877, Unao district article, vol. III. p. 580.

34. Basti Dist. Gaz., ed. Neville, 1907, p. 106.

35. Oudh Gaz., op.cit., vol. I, p. XVII.

a just claim on the ground of being proprietor of land on which the grain was grown.”³⁶

While the above quotations clearly stated the integral position of village servants class, which had a customary right in the grain heap that determined the internal socio-economy of the village, it is necessary to discuss the system of grain distribution with particular reference to the village servants. In the following table 6.2.3(1) we have presented the information about the grain heap distribution from four more districts, besides Bennet’s Gonda, namely, Sultanpur, Unaro, Basti and Sitapur districts.

It is seen that the assignments of harvests in favor of various members of the community were of three kinds: 1. On the standing crop before it was cut, 2. on the whole grain heap before the main division, 3. on the Raja’s \ proprietor’s or cultivator’s separate shares after the main division. The exact arrangement varied from place to place. For instance, as the Unao district article of Oudh Gazetteer³⁷ reported “the deductions made from the total produce (were) of two kinds: either a certain small patches of land (were) set aside and the grain raised on them separately cut and stored or after the grain has been harvested fixed proportions (were) deducted before the main division”. Another variation was noted by Simon Commander³⁸ in respect of Agra district, where “ten out of every hundred maunds being put aside as the portion allotted to different classes forming the village community executive of raiyats”. He further noted that in Bareilly the proportion so set-aside in a lumpsum for village servants by cultivators varied “according to local custom”.

The customary Biswa \ Mandi right to cut the standing crop on the cultivator’s land enjoyed by different village servants varied, as seen in the table. A significant feature that the table exhibits is the sharp variations in the rates of payment of grain dues even in geographically proximate tracts. Variations can be noticed at two levels: between categories of village servants and also between the same group across villages and regions. While land grants may affect the rate, so also the rates may differ between irrigated and dry tracts. Another feature of the table relates to the mode of payment of remuneration from the grain heap. While

36. Oudh Gaz. Unao Dist. article, op.cit., vol. III, p.583.

37. Vol. III, p. 580-587.

38. ‘The Jajmani system in North India: An examination of its logic and status across two centuries’, Modern Asian studies vol.17, No.2., 1983,p.302.

Table 6.2.3. : Assignment of Grain Dues from the Grain Heap.

Gonda District (1875).	Sultanpur District (1877-78).	Unao District (1877-78).	Sitapur District (1905)	Basti District (1907).
Stage I.: STANDING CROP				
Watchman of village and fields. Lohar. Barhai Carpenter. Ahir herdsman. Pandit / Priest and Cultivator At the time of each harvest.	Lohar. Ahir herdsman. Chaukidar of village site. Barhai. Gorait (crop watcher). Pandit. at the time of each harvest.	Barhai. Ahir herdsman. – Gets 1/3 rd std. Bigha for each beast if he takes charge of cattle both day and night otherwise 1 Biswa per beast for tending daytime only. Pandit.	1. One Biswa for every plough cut by tenant and in return given a whole dole called 'Sidha' or 'rakhwari' to landlords watchman. 2. 'Bisar': A strip left uncut along one side of the field for chaukidar, known as Bisar, but sometimes this due is given in grain on the threshing floor.	Mandi or 1/24 th bigha of standing crop / plough: enjoyed by Ahir herdsman – 4 Mandis one for each bullock. Barhai and Lohar – 1 mandi per each plough.
Stage II : AFTER HARVEST AND BEFORE DIVISION OF HEAP				
Bhatta payments: 1. Slave ploughman received 1/5 to 1/7 th of the heap + a pansari** added by the cultivator at each harvest. 2. Barhai, Lohar, Nai, Dhobi and Watchman received each 12 Pansaris of grain from each cultivator for each 4-bullock plough and 6	'Bhatta': (Grain Dues). 1. Ploughman took 1/5 th of the produce on his master's field. 2. Lohar took 18 pansaris for each plough at each harvest. 3. Hir herdsman, 4. Chaukidar, 5. Barhai Each got 15 pansaris per plough at each harvest. 6. Gorait, crop watcher was allowed 13 pansaris per plough each harvest.	Joura (Grain dues) 1. Ploughman took one maund in every 6. 2. Barhai took 1-1/2 local maund for each 4-bullock plough; the Lohar got exactly the same dues, but did not get Biswa. 3. Ahir herdsman got for tending cattle daytime only 30 srs of grain per beast; for both day and night he takes 1-1/2 mds per beast each harvest.	'Lehna' (Grain dues) 1. Barhai, Lohar, Chamar, Nai, Dhobi get a sheaf of wheat, a bundle of grain or 5 qrs/plough of Kharif crops. While this amount varies and the tenant compounded by giving a maund of grain to each servant at each harvest. 2. Tenant sets apart for himself a large sheaf either for each plough or each field.	Joura (Grain dues) 1. Nai, Dhobi, Barhai, Lohar, Ahir each gets 4 pansaris per plough each harvest. 2. Kahar, Kumhar, Pandit, Sokha each gets 2 pansaris per plough at each harvest. 3. Brahmins, Faquirs get 5 'Anjuris' or double handfuls each per harvest. 4. 'Harwahin' or wife of ploughman gets an indefinite quantity.

panasaris for each 2-bullock plough each harvest.	7. Pandit / astrologer got 6 panasaris / plough / harvest. 8. Kahar 9. Kumbhar 10. Dhobi 11. Nai 12. Guru or sooth sayer All got 6 panasaris each per plough per harvest.	4. Nai, Dhobi and Watchman were allowed 1-1/2 mds for each 4-bullock plough and 30 srs for each 2-bullock plough. 5. Pandit /astrologer took a 1 to 2 'Anjuris' or double handfuls of grain from each heap. 6. Beggars were allowed 1 or 2 double handfuls of grain from each heap.	3. Before final division Anjuris consisting of 5 to 13 handfuls were taken for the tenant, his god and landlord, his god, village priest, Bhat, Mali and Watchman. 4. Kur or ploughman's dues at 7-1/2 md. And Charu or herdsman's dues varying from 1 to 4 srs per md. were taken (but these dues are not usually given).	5. Weighman's quantity not stated.
Stage III: DEDUCTIONS FROM SHARES AFTER DIVISIONS – on removal of grain from the threshing floor.				
<u>Pharijaggi:</u> From the Raja's heap the cultivator got 1 seer per md. and Patwari 1 seer per md. and the Priest 1 Anjuri or double handful and the village headman got 1/10 of the remainder.	----	<u>Pharijaggi:</u> From hissa sarkari :- Ploughman: - 1 sr. in every md. From hissa Raiyati :- <u>Barahi:</u> 15 seers in every md. And a large armful of unthreshed ears of corn. <u>Lohar:</u> The same as that of Barhai. <u>Ahir:</u> 5 seers/animal for his daytime tending and for both day and night 15 srs/animal.	1. Patwari's rate as well as village expenses were usually taken from tenant's heap and given to landlord. This amounted to 1 or 2 srs/md. 2. Sweeping that remain, go to the tenant unless they were large, in which case he received a greater portion. 3. The empty ears and chaffa were also appraised in tenant's favor and an equivalent of landlord's share of it was taken from the tenant's heap.	<u>Khaliyani*</u> given to Nai, Dhobi, Barhai, Lohar and Ahir at the rate of pansari each after division. * It is the unclaimed grain left in the threshing floor after the operation of threshing and winnowing the corn are completed. It is also sometimes given to the tenant and sometimes divided between both the parties if it is sizable.

* Note: A pansari is 1/22nd of a maund, which is now about 82 lbs., but was probably between 50 to 60 lbs. before the British standardized the weight. There are 40 seers in a maund, about 2 lbs. today – Ref. W.C. Neale, *Economic change in rural India* op.cit., p. 23.

Sources:

1. Gonda District: As detailed by W.C. Neale from Benette's Final Settlement Report on the Gonda district, in his "Reciprocity and Redistribution in the Indian Village: Sequel to Some Notable Discussions", in Karl Polanyi et al (ed.). *Trade and Markets in the Early Empire*. Glencoe, Ill., Free Press, 1957, and his *Economic Change in Rural India*, New Haven and London, Yale University Press, 1962.
2. Sultanpur District Article, *Oudh Gazetteer* 1877-78, Vol. III, B. R. Publishing Corporation, Delhi, Reprinted, 1985, p. 507ff.
3. Unao District Article, *Oudh Gazetteer*, *ibid.*, pp. 580-587.
4. Sitapur District *Gazetteer*, ed. Nevill, H. R., Allahabad, 1905, Vol. XL of the *Gazetteer of United Provinces of Agra and Oudh*, p.90ff.
5. Basti District *Gazetteer*, ed. Nevill, H. R., Allahabad, 1907, Vol. XXXIII of the *Gazetteer of United Provinces of Agra and Oudh*, p.106ff.

payment of a defined quantity per plough, each harvest-a feature common in the Gangetic area- was the most popular method of remuneration, covering the entire class of village servants, the quantity so defined also varied between servants and between districts or regions or tracts. An alternative method of payment of remuneration, say so many seers per maund of the produce also showed variations. And a third was payment of fixed quantity per harvest, per beard (male), per beast also varied between servants and across district, region or tract, for the same class of servant.

Simon Commander³⁹ notes that in under populated areas two methods of payment prevailed. An allotted share of the harvest say 10% was set aside. This allotment varied, being higher in irrigated tract than in the dry where the workload was less. For artisans proper as well as Dhobi, Nai and others, a specified quantity per plough was set aside. Even so, one could still find, as in Agra district, the two methods co-existing side by side with ten out of hundred mounds being put aside as the portion allotted to different classes forming village service group exclusive of raiyats. Aside from this they received 5 seers per plough from the principal zamindars and 2.5 seers per plough from lesser zamindars.

Observing that the supposed regulation of quantity of grain remuneration by custom as disputable Commander⁴⁰ notes that there were a number of forces affecting the scale of remuneration which cannot easily be disentangled. Numbers and relative balance of forces within the village were also of significance in the determination of the rate of remuneration and equally the scope for caste involvement in the village service system. Thus on the whole variation in the rates of remuneration were “closely determined by very local factors-conditions of settlement, the distribution of power and above all land / labour ratio.” Was this village specificity the effect of continuing condition of autarky of isolation and self-sufficiency even in the 19th century? Or was it a “wage-in-kind where the wage rate is determined in the context of an improperly integrated market, by relative bargaining powers” as Commander seems to suggest?

Considering Bennet’s summation of the grain heap system operating in Oudh, its salient characteristics were: 1. remuneration in kind as a share of the grain heap; 2. the quantities disbursed were customarily defined; and 3. price played no part in the allocative process. While the core of the system remained around grain

39. op.cit., p.303.

40. op.cit., p.304.

payment throughout the 19th century, the peripheral servants and workers like Sonars, Telis, Bhadbhoojas, Dyers etc. were paid for their work in cash or grain evaluated according to ruling prices. The bulk of the ancillary workers, Barhais, Lohars, domestic servants and field labourers etc. derived the greater part of their income from the grain rights. As the most common medium of remuneration, produce payment was predominant, not only in Uttar Pradesh but also in the greater part of north India as also in the country as a whole.

In the previous chapter we have discussed the history of the gradual fading away of the grain heap around which the traditional village economy was built up and the village servant class was an integral part of the village system. We have also noted that money and market entered the grain heap through land revenue and rent. Though gradual and slow; this intrusion had its impact on the customarily defined share of village servants and field labourers both directly when payment in kind was gradually replaced by that in cash and indirectly, when the quantity of grain payment came to be evaluated into its money terms. As the Sultanpur district Gazetteer⁴¹ noted, “for field work payment is almost always made in grain and cash wages are generally unknown, although the amount of grain is calculated on its money value”. The whole process of transformation has been summed up by Simon Commander⁴² in the following words: “customarily defined share of the grain heap, conflicted increasingly with the pattern of rental and revenue engagements, with the trends towards individualised payment of such prestations. The grain heap model of apportionment was very much a minority in village accounting as early as 1840.” The Pilibhit district gazetteer⁴³ indicating the changes in the grain heap system noted that “the grain when collected on the threshing floor is generally weighed out or measured in baskets, the old system of division by heaps having disappeared ...”. Further the Kheri District Gazetteer⁴⁴ reported that “ordinarily the method of payment depends on the rental system, cash wages being found in cash rented lands, while elsewhere, wages are almost without exception paid in kind.” While the Benaras District Gazetteer ⁴⁵ also reported the

41. ed: Neville, vol. XLVI, of the Gaz. Of the United Provinces of Agra and Oudh, 1903, p.45.

42. op.cit., p.299.

43. Vol. XVII of the Gazetteers of United Provinces of Agra and Oudh, 1909, p.109.

44. Vol. XLII of the Gazetteers of United Provinces of Agra and Oudh, 1905, p.52.

45. Vol. XXIV of the Gazetteers of United Provinces of Agra and Oudh, 1909, p.

same, the Moradabad District Gazetteer⁴⁶ noted that payment in kind was altogether obsolete. The Kheri District Gazetteer⁴⁷ again noted that “Wages of labour are generally low and do not appear to have risen concurrently with prices. The chief reason for this is that agricultural labour is still paid either wholly or partly in grain and consequently, the money value of payments keeps pace with the state of the market.” The above quotations illustrate that while the transformation had set in, it was not uniform and conversion to a cash economy based on market principles from the entrenched economy in kind, was difficult, tardy and painful. Accordingly, the landlord- servant relationship tended to move likewise towards a more fragmented and individuated substance. In this process the crucial combining forces were the increasing prevalence of cash rents and the upward surge in numbers⁴⁸

6.2.4. The Praja

Against the background of the old system so far sketched, before presenting the emergence of the so-called Jajmani system, let us discuss the emergence of the new terminology in which the new system is couched.

While the Oudh Gazetteer (1877-78) includes village artisans and servants in the comprehensive term ‘Parja’⁴⁹ Opler and Singh⁵⁰ distinguish Parja (skt. Praja, subjects, people) as cultivators⁵¹ and “Parjan” (skt. Parijan i.e. attendants, followers) as servants). According to Wilson⁵² the term Parja or Parijan or corruptly Purjah, Purjan means subjects, people, tenants and dependants. But “the

46. Vol. XVI Gazetteers of United Provinces of Agra and Oudh, 1911, p.47.

47. Ibid. , p.52.

48. Commander S., op.cit., p.299.

49. op.cit., vol II, p.318., vol III, pp. 96-97.

50. Division of labour in an Indian village, op.cit., pp. 464 – 96.

51. In the sense of cultivators the term “Praja” was also used during the historical period in Maharashtra, see Joshi S.N., Marathe Kalin Samaj Darshana, Anatha Vidyarthi Grah, Pune 1960, p. 2.

52. A Glossary of Judicial and Revenue Terms, Munshiram Manoharlal, Delhi, 1885, reprinted, S.V. Praja. Wilson further notes, “In Cooch Bihar it stands for a cultivator-at-will ...and is removable at the pleasure of the proprietor to whom he is usually in debt... and is more like a serf than a free agent. In Cuttack the term is applied to low castes, such as the Barber, Washerman, Fisherman, Weaver, Leather worker, and Toddy-tapper who would formerly sometimes sell themselves and their families into slavery until they repaid the purchase money.”

term Parja or Parijan used for either agriculturist householder or men belonging to occupations which had no social status, used in modern times has to be distinguished from servants and slaves alike and stands for men of certain occupations who are in a way permanently associated with the chief of the village as his attendants.”⁵³ These Parja / Parijan were “permanently associated” with the Thakur who owned the village estate. In the past the Thakur Zamindar either found these tenants and non agricultural specialists in his domain or brought them to the village and settled them by giving a house site, a patch of rent free land and allowances of grain at harvest for rendering service to his village. These Parijan as noted earlier, worked on hereditary tenure and since no other specialist other than the Parijan were allowed to reside in the village without the permission of the Thakur landlord they functioned as monopolists of their trade in the village.

The counterpart of Parja is not Raja as logic would have it, but in the modern anthropological terminology, he is Jajman, Jujman or corruptly Jijman (skt. Yajman). Wilson⁵⁴ defines Jajman as “a person who employs and fees Brahmans for the performance of any solemn or religious ceremony.. as it is not unusual for the relation between the employer and those employed to become hereditary, the later came to regard the former as their pupils or clients, and claim as their right and due, the fees that are paid on such occasions, although they should not perform the ceremonies. From religious, the term passed to very miscellaneous relations and barbers, washermen and sweepers claimed in some parts of Hindustan, a prescriptive or hereditary right to be employed and paid by certain individuals, whom they therefore style their Jajmans, and the Ghatias and others, who conduct parties of pilgrims to Benares or other sacred places, give the same name to all those to whom they act as guides. In the south of India Yajman or Ijman, commonly denotes a householder especially one of respectability and who is often the headman of the village to which functionary the title is consequently also applied.”

In an elaborate and intensive search for the usage of the term Jajman outside the sphere of its classical usage for the patron of Brahman Purohit, Peter Mayer⁵⁵ after wading through the 19th century compilations of traditional Hindu law, early travellers’ accounts, Revenue glossaries, and ethnographic studies of tribes and

53. Gopal Lallanji, *Economic Life in Northern India*, Delhi, 1963, p.24.

54. Glossary, *op.cit.*, p.266.

55. *Inventing Village Tradition: The Late 19th Century Origins of the North Indian Jajmani system*, *Modern Asian Studies*, 1993, vol. 27, no. 2, pp. 357-395.

castes etc., comes to the conclusion that Wilson's is the earliest recorded reference to the term Jajman-Jajmani. Elliot⁵⁶ subsequently defined the term Jajman as "a person whom Brahmans or menial such as barbers, washerman and sweepers have an hereditary right to claim certain perquisites on the occasion of any ceremonies or services which they are called upon to perform". In the above definitions, it is significant to note that the artisans such as carpenter and blacksmith, let alone the potter, are not explicitly mentioned. However William Crooke, though his *Rural and Agricultural Glossary for Northwest Provinces and Oudh* (1888) did not contain the term, by 1896 he was found using the term, but there is no mention, as Mayer knows, "of Jajmani, Jajman or Kamin in the sense of Wiser's study" which has been the basis for modern anthropologists' Jajmani system. But the term occurs in the Census literature from 1901 to 1911, which will be noticed subsequently.

While the term Jajman never appears in the Gazetteer literature of North West Province and Oudh / United Provinces of Agra and Oudh, the usage of the term Parja, seems to be confined to Oudh region only, in the Oudh Gazetteer (1877-1878) and not in the subsequent series of District Gazetteer of the United Provinces of Agra and Oudh (1905-1911) except in the Lucknow District volume (No. XXXVII, p.103-104) by the term "Parjawat" or rent collected by the zamindars for the residential site given to the non-agricultural specialists. This is repeat information contained in the Oudh Gazetteer.⁵⁷

While the counterpart of Jajman is not Purohit as the Brahminical model would have it, but "Kamin" (skt. Karmin, worker) which is rarely met with in U.P. Gazetteers or Censuses like the word Jajman. Even Blunt's 1911 Census Report⁵⁸, which gave the first general description of Jajmani system, does not use the word Kamin, nor does his book based on it mention the word Kamin. However the later study by M.C. Pradhan⁵⁹ dealing with Jats of Northern India in Muzaffarnagar district

56. *Memoirs on the History, Folklore and Distribution of Races of the North West Provinces of India*, 1869, p. 362.

57. We do not know, and are not sure whether the term Parja is used in the Atkinson Series of Gazetteers of NWP (1874-1884) as also the pre-Atkinson series of Statistical Accounts and Memoirs etc., (1849-1887) of NWP, which were not available to us and had to remain contented with the fact that Nevill's Series (1905-1911) uses most of the important information contained in the above series.

58. Vol. XV, p.332 and, *The Caste System of Northern India*, 1931, S. Chand and Co. Delhi, 1969, pp. 242-245.

59. *The Political System of the Jats of the Northern India*, Oxford University Press, 1966, p.45.

of western U.P. notes that the artisans were called as Lagdars rather than Kamins and are treated with some respect. In the Punjab Gazetteers, the “derogatory” word Kamin \ Kammi occurs quite frequently and stands for “village menials.” According to Elliot, the term Kamin “in plains is applied to village servants but in Kumaon it is used synonymously, with Burah to signify a superintendent of village management.” Elsewhere in the same work he uses the nomenclature Kaminan (sic.) for Tarkhan, Lohar, Chamar etc. who receive certain dues for their work. However, Mayer points out that in Elliot’s work the “the terms for both the old system of village service and Jajmani appear commingled”. Thus in point of usage the terms Jajman and Kamin in the dyadic patron-client relationship are of later and recent origin during the Colonial regime.

6.2.5. The Emergence of Jajmani Relations and the Origin of Jajmani System.

In a seminal contribution to the literature on Jajmani system, Peter Mayer⁶⁰ discusses the emergence of Jajmani relations on two counts, namely the emergence of terminology of Jajmani to express a changing social reality that had set in at about the close of the 19th Century and the changing social reality itself. In the context of greater weight of references to “village servants” the term Jajman was still restricted to the classical relationship between Brahmin and the Parishioner and its primary reference was still that of religious ceremony or ritual. Drawing attention to Hunter’s⁶¹ discussion of village officials at Bankura, the term Jajman had come to have similar connotation at least for barbers (Nai-Barhman) in parts of Bengal. But in William Crooke’s⁶² account of 1888 submitted to Duffrein enquiry Mayer finds that none of the artisan households were described as having “Jajmani” relationships and though indebted, in no case was the right of service pledged as security. By 1896 when the situation had changed Crooke⁶³ began to

60. *Inventing Village Tradition... The late 19th century origins of the North Indian Jajmani System*, *Modern Asian Studies*, 1933, vol. 27, no.2. pp. 374ff.

61. *Statistical Account of Bengal* vol.4, 1877, pp. 243-245.

62. *Notes of Food and economical condition of agricultural and neighbouring classes in Etah district*, in *An Enquiry in to the economic condition of agricultural and labouring classes in the North Western Provinces and Oudh*, Govt. Press, Naini Tal, 1888 pp. 20-100

63. *A Rural and Agricultural Glossary of the NWP and Oudh*, Supdt. of Govt. Printing, Calcutta, 1888, reprinted, Oxford University Press, New York, 1989.

speak of the “older form of village service as well as of what are unmistakably Jajmani relationships”. During this period of transition he instances the blacksmith whose status was equated to Jajmani and his description of barber illustrated that Nai had established dyadic relations, in view of the personalized nature of his duties which brought him immediately closer to the serving families. While Crooke’s reference to village Bhangi as “village menial” in contrast to his urban counterpart who had acquired a “Jajmani” beat of exclusive monopolistic right of service, was not of much significance as the village Bhangi was rare, his reference to Chamars who got assigned themselves to certain number of high caste families rendering their traditional services was not clearly spelt out as Chamars mostly worked as farm labour with or without working as tanners and cobblers. As regards artisans Crooke was not clear-cut, however, a decade earlier, the Kheri District Article of Oudh Gazetteer 1877⁶⁴ noted that “there is no large class of either carpenters or smiths in this district... work of this kind is done for the rich generally by permanent dependants of their own who receive grants of land, for the poor, by regular village servants who are paid by a portion reaped at harvest. When this is not the case, village carpenters and smiths got as low as 2.5 annas per day.” The Kheri District Gazetteer of 1905 repeated the same information.

At this same period, E.A. Gait⁶⁵ first recorded Jajmani and its synonyms in the 1901 Census Report. In Bihar he noted that “in many districts the barber, washerman, blacksmith etc. each had his own circle (Birt or Sashan) within which he works and no one else may flinch his customers or Jajmans, from him on pain of severe punishment at the hands of caste committee. The exclusive right to employment by the people in the circle constituting a man’s Birt is often so well established that it is regarded as heritable property and with the Mohammedans, is often granted as a dower”.

According to Mayer the first general description of the Jajmani system was sketched by E.A.H. Blunt⁶⁶ in 1912 in his report on the Census of 1911 for United Province of Agra and Oudh wherein he also refers to “Birt Nai” and “Birt Bhangi” and translates them as “caste dues”. He further notes that “Jajmani is also used but generally it is reserved for the Brahminical dues and probably includes not

64. Vol. II, p.197 and District Gazetteer ed. Neville, p.52

65. Vol.VI, part 1, report.. Lower Provinces of Bengal and their Feudatories, Calcutta, p.473.

66. Census of India 1911, United Provinces of Agra and Oudh Alahabad 1912, p.332. His book, op.cit., repeats much of the text of the Census report.

only dues connected with Purohiti, but those vaguer sources of income, such as presents received by all sorts of brahmans at feasts of every kind". He further notes that the right of service in the new system could be freely transferred and the "Dom's begging beat and Bhangi's Jajmani are often given as dowry".

By the time Blunt's report on 1911 Census, Mayer notes, the term Jajmani had come into common use to describe the emergence of a new system of relationships of service, the one in which those who were once a "kind of public servants" had become owners of an exclusive right to serve individual families of patrons.

Noting that we get increasing evidence beginning in Bengal of the transformation of the pre-existing village social relationship, Mayer refers to Hunter's discussion of changes in service tenures of land in Birbhum district. In Birbhum as in Bankura village artisans were already individual entrepreneurs in respect of their professional services, but they did however retain "chakran" or service lands, "to compensate for the provision of residual village services of ritual and ceremonial nature that were caste duties rather than their specialist service."

According to Mayer the above Bengal evidence clearly shows that "when the secular aspect of specialist's service first took on a dyadic character, the nexus of ritual services was not immediately established through patron families, but remained the collectivity of the village as before." This according to him, "suggests that the essential aspect of ritual service, which according Pocock is central to Jajmani, came to be associated with Jajmani ties only after secular and commodity services did."

While it is not necessary to go into details of each and every case of adoption of Jajmani terminology by non-Brahmin service specialist castes in the course of the 19th century, it was the barber who probably was "the ring leader or fugleman of Jajmani relations on account of his traditional role as an intermediary between families as a confidential envoy and a match maker carrying announcements and the invitations, and also acting as Brahmin's assistant in the latter's absence himself acting as a hedge priest at weddings and funerals for lower castes." This leaves no doubt that the barber used the term precisely that was used by the Brahmins themselves and refer their patron as Jajman. Both Berreman and Gould⁶⁷ have

67. Berreman J.D., *Caste and Economy in the Himalayas, Economic Development and Cultural Change*, vol.10, no.4, 1963,p.389. And Gould H.A., *A Jajmani System of North India: its Structure, Magnitude and Meaning*, *Ethnology*, vol. 3, 1964, p.16.

argued that adoption by artisans the term Jajman to refer to their patrons appears as the former notes "to be the result of substitution by analogy of the term which is convenient for explanatory purposes, because it is understood by those accustomed to the Brahminical system of client relationship." In this context we need not miss here to refer to the movement by carpenters, as narrated by Crooke, declaring to be Brahmins and wearing the sacred thread; nor can we miss to refer to Bernard Cohn's later study of the movement by Chamars towards unilateral Sanskritization to enhance their status. During the time when revolutionary changes were taking place in the position of village artisans and menials, Crooke observed that "they are no longer inclined to submit to the bullying and drudgery. They know their rights and are determined to assert them". The impetus for change which the above reflects is unmistakable.

More important than changes in the pre-existing village social relations was the major social dislocation due to growing partitions of Zamindari and Bhaiyachara villages in to individual holdings. These collective land owning communities which contained an enormous number of co-sharing members were under great stress in the last quarter of the 19th century and were splitting. Mayer refers to various Settlement Reports and District Gazetteers to substantiate the above which details need not be noted here except the following. In respect of Jaunpur District, Mayer quotes the following from P.C.Wheeler's Settlement Report of 1886: "the village community which sir Charles Metcalfe in sentences of historical fame declared to be phoenix-like and indestructible by outward force, has in these parts destroyed itself. There is no corporate body. There is no absorption of the individual in the group. The unit is now the individual and not the village. That status must succumb to contract is no new truth. The tribe gives place to the clan, the clan to the village, the village to family and family to the individual." The extraordinarily minute subdivision of land due to partitions amongst the increasing body of the co-sharers in many cases, rendered revenue administration difficult in the extreme. It also led to the complete breakdown of the Lambardari system as the co-sharers almost invariably began to pay the revenue direct and the Lambardar's influence was of no use in dealing with cases of arrears, as the Gazipur District Gazetteer, 1909 noted. "With the village solidarity thus broken down individuation ruled the situation."

What happened to the pre-existing village service system when these collective tenures were divided? The village servants at the outset were employed by the village with the whole village as their work sphere, despite their residence on the

land of different zamindars. But during the later part of the 19th century as the number of shareholders and servants increased on the one hand, and on the other the basic trend of the British rule in general, of destroying the territorial solidarity of the village, loosened the jointness of the village, so that the village servants came to be divided among Pattis of the village. As we have noted earlier the villages under the Pattidari and Bhaiyachara tenure were partitioned in to a number of Pattis (divisions of agnatic landed estates) to facilitate the revenue collection. Each Patti had its own set of service caste allowed to reside in the Patti. While these Patti-specific service castes were allowed to serve the landlords and cultivators of other Pattis in the village-a sort of built in arrangement towards development of patron client relation between Pattis, they were originally supposed to owe allegiance only to the land owners and cultivators of their Patti on whose Patti they had built their homes. While these service castes mostly served the landlords and cultivators of their own Patti the sweepers and Chamars were not allowed to serve outside their own Patti. It should be noted these castes were considered as “Riaya” (dependants) of the landlord. However no idea is available as to what extent each Patti was self sufficient in respect of its service castes.

Considering the impact of the large scale subdivision of land amongst co-parceners, on the service castes, in a dynamics of the situation the balance of forces in the serving and service-receiving households may get affected if there is a differential rate of growth between the two. While a partition of a serving family leads to a division of work among themselves, a partition of the land holding family leads, besides the division of land, to apportionment of the service castes retained by it and Jajmani like relations of patron clientage emerge. The examples noted by Mayer relate to Chamars, who it should be remembered were more important as field labourers than as leather workers. The District Gazetteer of Muzaffarnagar⁶⁸ noted the hereditary connection existing between the zamindar and Chamar ploughman employed by them. About them the Gazetteer of the Aligarh District (1909) wrote, “Chamars were not long ago regarded as mere serfs tied to particular holdings to such an extent that no partition was considered complete until the sharer had allotted to his share a number of Chamars in proportion to his interest in the estate.

Mayer⁶⁹ notes that “the division of estates... was a traumatic process which involved the allocation to the individual share holders of the hitherto collectively

68. Ed. Neville, vol. III, 1903, p.90.

69. op.cit., pp. 383-384.

managed means production, whether land or labour. Similarly where estates were purchased by outsiders at auction for failure to pay revenue they acquired thereby no right to labour services and had to reach individual arrangement with local artisans and servants.”

“There were thus” according to Mayer, “two forces of change from whose convergence Jajmani emerged. The first of these was the growing partition of zamindari and Bhaiyachara villages into individual holdings. The second was the mounting pressure on land holders to offer significant incentive to village artisans in order to retain their services.” Under the general scarcity of labour and high grain prices in this period. The key to the unique character of Jajmani, as Mayer points out,⁷⁰ is to be found in the need to induce skilled labour to remain in the village. In this regard, he notes that “in general, the nature of rights in service were symmetrically equivalent to those which existed in land. The collective rights of management in villages in U.P. were reflected in the collective obligations in service. When market forces and indebtedness led to the fission of collective holdings into the private property of individuals, it is possible that a corresponding change was seen as necessary for the sphere of service.” And hence what is striking about the new Jajmani relations is that instead of mere patron-client ties they clearly took the form of property, which could not only be inherited but also transferred and sold even to moneylenders.

Although the essence of Jajmani right as the defining characteristic was a form of property “it must be said that on the whole this aspect of the system has been neglected by the anthropologists”⁷¹ so much so that any sort of service relation in the village has been indiscriminately branded as Jajmani and has come to obliterate and replace whatever vestiges of the old community maintained village service system. Surprisingly by 1930 the U.P. Provincial Banking Enquiry Committee had found that Jajmani relationship had been extended in the course of time to include the relationship between borrower and moneylender.⁷² Where earlier writers like Crooke and Blunt had seen Jajmani relationship “as a discrete localized phenomenon, Wiser’s incorporation of Jajmani into the orientalist tradition subsequently endorsed by Beidelman was,” according to Mayer⁷³, “a major

70. op.cit., p.385

71. Ibid.

72. Mayer p.. op.cit., p. 385.

73. Op.cit., p.388.

act of invention, a fateful and obliterating leap by which Jajmani was equated with Baluta and southern systems.”

The emergence of Jajmani relations has been noticed as a historical transformation from the pre-existing community maintained village service system to Jajmani system. Looking at the phenomenon by the middle of the 20th century as modern anthropologists have done we have noted Fuller⁷⁴, observing that “it is quite possible that there may be no absolute certainty whether village servants are linked to the village as a whole or to individual patrons”, “because the distinction between the two types is conceptual” and more so in the context of zamindari villages. He further noted⁷⁵ that in many villages, there do exist relationships between patrons and clients or village and servants, of the type labeled as Jajmani or Baluta in which customary payments in kind are made. These different types of “relationships and payments cannot be subsumed within a single analytical category and they do not when taken together define or constitute an integrated system” as conceived by Wiser and the modern anthropologists.

While we do not get any information as to the extent and magnitude of the transformation, André Bataille⁷⁶ noted that “Jajmani system as a full blown institutional order did not exist anywhere.” Clearly such dyadic relationship between serving and service receiving families on hereditary tenure could never have been village-wide. Further service requirements of different types of artisans and servants, by different classes of villagers were different, such that there were regular running relations and casual ones. However, considering the enduring nature of Jajmani ties, the pivotal position occupied by families controlling the land, which were usually of superior status, need not be lost sight of. It was the zamindars who were in the vortex of the transformation. With large sub-division of estates into numerous individual shares and sales of land to auction purchasers for failure to pay the land revenue, the agrarian structure of the village was completely disturbed along with the pre-existing village service system, the members of which were demanding significant incentives in order to retain their services under conditions of general scarcity of labour and mounting grain prices in this period. The old collectivity had vanished along with the hierarchical system of reciprocity

74. Op.cit., p 38-39.

75. Op.cit, p.41.

76. ‘Indian village past and present’, in Peasants in History, -Essays in honour of Daniel Thorner, ed.; Hobsbaum et al, Oxford University Press, 1980, p.114.

and redistribution and individualized relations between Jajman and Kamin had set in leading to dyadic family relationships on hereditary contractual basis, by giving in exclusive right to employment and remuneration on the classical Brahmanical model.

Noting that Jajmani system was in dissolution almost from its coming into being, Mayer⁷⁷ has argued that Jajmani was in widespread existence in Uttar-Pradesh for less than thirty years when Blunt first described it .In 1936 William Wiser had noted that the system which he observed in Karimpur, Mainpuri district had changed within living memory. That has been the consistent finding of studies by Oscar Lewis⁷⁸, J.W. Elder⁷⁹, and others. Even so, Gould H.A.⁸⁰ in his study of village Sherupur-Naktipur of Faizabad district found four principal forms of service by village artisans and servants and payments, including Jajmani services with payments of agreed amounts of grain at both harvests to a specialist who was engaged on a permanent basis. The second form was service for payments in cash or grain on a piecework basis to a specialist, who has been engaged on a permanent basis. This category covered all those who could not afford to retain a permanent specialist on Jajmani basis. The third form consisted of mutual and reciprocal services which artisan and service specialist undertook among them to which, Berreman⁸¹ and Rowe⁸² have rightly called attention. The final form of service and payment related to services rendered by specialist servants who happened to be handy and willing to provide particular service on an adhoc basis on payment of cash or grain.

Gould finds that regular payments to specialists on Jajmani were confined to four or five castes viz. Dhobi, Nai, Lohar, Barhai and Kumhar. While the first four received payments in grain at harvest the Kumhar had only a few permanent Jajmans and most other clients paid him on piece work basis. But it is not that

77. Op.cit., p. 386.

78. Village Life in North India, Urbana University of Illinois Press, 1958.

79. Rajpur-Change in the Jajmani System of an Uttar-Pradesh Village, in Change and Continuity in India's villages, ed. K. Ishwaran Colombia University Press, New York, 1970.

80. A Jajmani System of North India: its Structure, Magnitude, and Meaning, Ethnology, vol. III, 1964,p. 16.

81. Hindus of the Himalayas Oxford University Press, Bombay, 1963,p.58

82. Changing Rural Class Structure and the Jajmani, Human Organization, vol.22, no.1, 1963, p.42.

every Jajman maintained all the four or five specialist class on Jajmani basis. Thus according to Gould, in his study village Jajmani was limited to a very small proportion of the entire spectrum of specialists.

6.3.0. The Kamin - Sepidar System of the Punjab.

The following study of the village service system in the Punjab notes that it was also a two tier system where Sepidar system, which apparently resembled the Jajmani system of U.P. appears to have been there since the institution of the village. In particular, it was not a product of changes of the type that gave rise to Jajmani system in Uttar Pradesh, in the late 19th century.

6.3.1. Villages and Village Communities.

While the Punjab land system of joint or landlord villages was essentially a 'variety' of the Northwestern provincial system, with its own characteristic differences in detail, there was an essential difference. Though their village systems were almost alike, the constitution of the agricultural society was different in more than one way. The bulk of the land was not cultivated by tenants as in the Northwestern province (N.W.P.). The petty proprietors or zamindars as they were called, as co-sharers in the village estates, holding fractional shares, cultivated their own lands. The village owners had a strong sense that they as a body, whether actually enjoying the lands in severalty or still remaining wholly or partly undivided, had landlord's right over the whole area of the village, cultivable and waste alike.

According to Baden Powell⁸³ the evidence in the Punjab does not point to a growth of landlord bodies over non-landlord growths as in Uttar Pradesh. The joint village of the Punjab plains is not occasional; "it occurs over the whole country and seems to be an occupation by special tribes, chiefly Jats and Gujars who came in great force to occupy large areas or form by multiplication in course of time, a complete network of villages held by tribesmen who being conquerors left their descendants that joint claim to their several locations."

We have earlier noted in chapter III Baden Powell's two patterns of village formation in north India. In contrast while the U.P. pattern of formation of zamindari

83. Land Systems of British India, vol.2, and p.64.

villages into “little kingdoms”⁸⁴ by Rajput clans over an area already populated and then parcelling it out among clans’ lineages for further settlement, collection of revenue and control of cultivation, in the Punjab the small groups of settlers of the Jat clans have been established by clearing and cultivating land, thus providing a base from which by fission of groups of close kindred as one by one they branched off from an original center, into the uncultivated land on the edge of the original settlement. This illustrates the process of clan expanding on the spot from a small center and building up groups of close kindred whose landholdings were defined one by one as they were taken up and naturally formed a village. After their founding, satellite villages maintained connections with the parent village community. The cluster of such related communities (Thapa or Ilaga) formed cohesive group in relation to government and any external threat. This segmentary kinship pattern of Jats accounts for the process of founding villages, their internal organizations of the community and the nature of its relations with neighboring villages.

Thus, in the Punjab, great territorial landlords were absent and landlord claim was “distributed” so to say, among all grades of the tribe or clan on account of Bhaiyachara system of equal land sharing; not according to genealogical table, but according to custom. But the landlord spirit was felt by the whole body of the tribes, who formed the village groups with so much idea of equality amongst themselves and a full sense of superiority and proprietorship in their allotment. The proprietors never placed themselves on a level with those conquered or with dependants and cultivators they called in to aid them in bringing the land under cultivation. The Jat custom was to divide the land equally between the original conquerors or colonizers and leaders of Thoks (maximum lineage groups). The Bhaiyachara communities at first started with a considerable area, the territory acquired by them being divided into groups of villages. But as the colonization stopped and descendants increased the territory was split into equal groups of villages or single village estates and shared between Thoks of original colonizers. These shares were then divided into portions of a village owned by descendant lineages of founders, resulting atleast into the present Patti system. A Patti is a division of an agnatic landed estate. The fields of a Patti were typically scattered in all areas of a village’s lands and were sometimes even scattered across different

84. Cohn B.S., Some notes on law and change in north India, in *Economic Development and Cultural Change*, University of Chicago, vol. VIII, 1959, p.80.

villages. Estates owned shares in the village residential site, divided into Pattis named after estates.

Scholars of Mughal India agree that below the paragana level there was no other official unit of administration and no formal level of administration linking Mughal officials in the paragana to cultivators living in the village. However it was the later British government revenue administration that explicitly based itself on Pattis as landed estates with the headman (Lambardar) as the tax agent for an estate.

Though landlord tenures in the Punjabi villages were of the standard zamindari, Pattidari and Bhaiyachara type, over time many of the zamindari estates became Pattidari and Pattidari estates tended to become Bhaiyachara. While the primary division of proprietary rights between the main subdivisions of a village followed one form, the internal distribution among several proprietors of each subdivision followed another form, which itself varied from one subdivision to another. Under the circumstances it became highly difficult to classify a village under any one of the recognized forms and the British settlement authorities accepted the existing individual shares held in possession and treated them as de-facto holdings and were assessed at the proper average rate. This procedure of revenue settlement made with the community turned out to be nearly Raiyatwari with the difference that the government dealt with the united body of proprietors and not directly with each individual.

The most important community in the Punjab is that of Jats, who are a well-known peasant caste organized in to exogamous petriclans and are divided into three religious sections- Hindu, Muslim and Sikh. They are agriculturists par excellence. Besides Jats, the Rajputs are in importance, the majority of whom are Muslims. The Hindu Rajputs are found mainly in a northeast corner of Punjab and the Himalayan tract. Both Jat and Rajput castes \ tribes have unilineal descent groups called clans and lineages. But Rajput lineages are far from being localized kin groups having a territorial area all to themselves as the Thoks of Jats have. Again in contrast to Jat villages where Bhaiyachara tenure was universal, the Rajput villages kept up, at least, the form of ancestral shares as descendants of one founder who had some pretensions to territorial rank and nobility.

We have already noted about the Pattis, which were not only important for land revenue purposes but also for the formation of village communities significantly different from those elsewhere in the country. These were formed

on the basis of the residential and agricultural lands held by the original colonizers and their descendant lineages (Thoks) at the time of partition of the village for the purpose of fixing the revenue demands and facilitating its collection by the British government. While the Pattis were named after the influential persons in line from the original colonizers, this does not mean that there was only one Thok (Maximum lineage group) in each Patti or that the land allotted to the Patti belonged only to that Thok. As a matter of fact there were more than one Thok in a Patti at the time of partition of the village in to Pattis. The pure Pattidari system, where the land belongs only to the descendant of the person whose name the Patti bears, was not applied to the Jat villages of the Khap (clan territory) on account of their Bhaiyachara land tenure system. It was recognized that other Thoks in a Patti, as descendants from the original colonizers had equal rights to the residential and agricultural lands, which they held at the time of partition. The purpose of naming a Patti after an influential person of one of the descendant Thoks was to hold him responsible for the land revenue in case of default by the zamindars of the Patti, by virtue of his kinship affiliation to the Pattidar after whom the Patti was named.

While it is possible that the clan village of Jats may have a number of Pattis each of Hindu, Muslim and Sikh, each Patti had its own complement of service castes, as regards whom Crooke⁸⁵ wrote that “the menials are attached not so much to the village as to the tribe which has maintained its influence more successfully than in other parts of the country. So much is this the case that when the tribe migrates, its dependants, Bhats, Brahman or Doms... accompany it.” Though the members of these service castes could also serve the zamindar patron of other Pattis, they were originally supposed to owe allegiance only to the zamindars of their own Patti on whose lands they had built their houses. While these service castes mostly did serve only the zamindars of their own Patti, the Chuhra (sweepers) and Chamars were certainly not allowed to serve outside their own Patti. This allegiance of the service castes to their Patti zamindars and the kinship affinity between the zamindars of the Patti produced a feeling of Patti solidarity within the village, which was utilized in the traditional political system of the village. The Hindu (Jat) Pattis were again divided on the basis of descent groups: Thoks (maximal lineages), sub-thoks (major segments of maximal lineage) and Khandans (minimal lineages) each having a political council or Panchayat of

85. Natives of Northern India, Archibald Constable and co. Ltd., 1907, p.147.

its own exercising social control within its group, playing an important part in the social and political life the village in its traditional form.

In the light of the above, it is clear that Jat village community was that of clansmen managed by a council of elders. The bond, it is important to note, was “municipal” rather than a community of property as in the case of U.P. The village communities were thus communities of clansmen linked sometimes by a common ancestor, sometimes by marriage ties, sometimes by the fact of a joint foundation of the village. The villages were, as noted, were broken into major and minor divisions. The internal minor divisions sprang up from a number of causes but all members of the proprietary body were equal and considered themselves immeasurably superior to other inhabitants of the village and styled themselves as zamindars. Even so, the municipal management of the village community claimed to exercise a certain limited control over the members and to exercise reversionary right to the land of members who ceased to cultivate or failed to pay the revenue, but beyond this there was complete individual freedom.

In spite of the fact that the Jat village was a clan community, it continued as a basic structural type, both in relation to the administration apparatus and social setting. However, as pointed out by Kessinger⁸⁶, it did not fit into the Metcalfian description independent, self-sufficient village community. Because of the cross cutting of estates and villages, it was difficult at times to determine where one village physically ended and another began. If economic self-sufficiency had ever existed in rural Punjab, it involved clusters of villages around a “qusbah” – an area considerably larger than a single settlement.

6.3.2. Kamins or Village Servants.

Constituting an integral part in the social organization and the economy of the village community in the Punjab, the cultivator in the village was served by a host of persons. While the services of some were directly connected with agriculture, the others, mostly domestic servants and religious functionaries helped and served the cultivator in other ways. All these village servants variously referred in the administrative papers and the writings of the British officials and authors as “artisans and menials” or simply “village menials” were called “Kamins” in the village vernacular.

86. Vilayatpur, 1848-1968, University of California Press, Berkley, 1974, pp. 24-27.

In a Punjabi village there were two castes / classes, namely zamindars or landowners and Kamins or village artisans and servants who did not own land. The Kamin were divided in to different castes, which indicated the occupation they had inherited from their ancestors and which was to be practiced by their successors. In a Muslim village the fact of belonging to different castes did not create any social barrier, as all of them followed Islam. Even in respect of other villages caste as an institution played “a far less important part in the social life of the Punjab than in other parts of India. Its bonds were stronger in the east than in the west and generally in towns than in the villages”.⁸⁷

Though the ownership of land was the dividing line between the zamindars and Kamin the interest of both was centered on the land. For the zamindar, it was important to make the land productive, and to accomplish this he needed labor and specialized services of Kamins. Thus zamindars and Kamin were interdependent in the functional sense and not necessarily in the caste sense. H.A. Rose⁸⁸ in 1901 census of the Punjab and Delhi territories noted that, under the old social system the village artisans and menials “by custom are share holders in the community in spite of their dependence on the land holding tribes.” They had a right to certain shares of the produce of the land and in return they performed definite duties for the benefit of village community as a whole. Under the social organization of the village, its land system and village management, the Kamins worked under the patronage of the headman (Lambardar) and the landed proprietors and by custom they received a certain portion of grain at harvest time. This allowance was known as “Hakk Kamini.”

While all members of the proprietary body were held equal and considered themselves as immeasurably superior to other inhabitants, the Kamins who were given land sites in the different Pattis of the village for residence, were one among the inferiors- “mere menials”, along with traders, Brahmins, oil pressers, and weavers etc. The distinctive sign of their inferiority was that they were all “strangers within the gate” and were liable to pay “Hearth fee” (Kudhi Kamini, c.f. Parjawat of U.P.) to the proprietary body. According to the Punjab customary law, as the inherited site of the village belonged to the proprietary body, the custom assumed that non-proprietors had settled under grants from that body in return for the performance of certain tasks. However, the status of the Kamin did not in any

87. Imperial Gazetteer of India, Provincial series, Punjab, vol. 2, p.68.

88. Vol. XVII., p. 367.

way spring from the payment of Hearth fee alone as those other non- proprietors who paid hearth fee such as shop keepers, oil men and goldsmiths etc. were not recognized as Kamin and were more or less independent of the proprietary body. But a Kamin or village menial was one who for certain clearly defined regular service, as opposed to occasional service, to the village community and received certain well-known dues. He might of course receive such as may be agreed upon in return for other services, but this in no way altered his position.

The families of Kamins, by hereditary custom got “attached” to their own families of Zamindars of the lineage, and their rights and obligations were recognized from generation to generations. Such attachments were originally formed under various circumstances in the long history of the village since its foundation. But there were other “attachments” with other Zamindars as clients as also service agreements with non-proprietary residents of the village mutually entered into by Kamins. Besides, between Kamins themselves there was reciprocal service relationship. But the “attachment” was at two levels. The first and the common one was the Kamin service system of the village, where the Kamin performed definite duties to the clients in return for payment of allowances as per village custom. The second level was the special contractual relationship entered into, on hereditary basis, by the Kamin with clients for a running relationship of work, specially determined and annual remuneration mutually agreed. This is the Sepidari system, which will be discussed separately.

Considering the dues or allowances to be paid to each class of Kamin, in some villages, these were fixed at the time of revenue settlements and recorded in the village administration paper- Wajib-ul-arz, but in others they were settled by mutual agreement and in still others they were left to the discretion of the employing Zamindar. Even where the rates were fixed, non-proprietors were generally left to make their own arrangement by mutual agreement.

Besides the grain dues (faslana) at each semi annual harvest and perquisites (laag) on ceremonial occasions, the Kamins enjoyed numerous rights and privileges in the village. Below are listed some important of them:

1. The Kamins were given house- sites, free of payment of hearth fees. If given free it was more often hedged with a condition that they, for e.g., hand over all their manure that accumulated, except the cow-dung, which they were allowed to retain for their fuel cakes. While mud for structural purposes was available for them from the village pond, the timber,

necessary for roofing etc. was provided for, in most part free of charge by the Zamindars who had trees on their holdings. If the Kamin were to leave the village for any reason, he was allowed to take away his building.

2. The use of wells and ponds for watering the cattle and for drinking purposes was allowed to them freely.
3. They could take clay from the village common for any purpose. The particular beneficiary in this case was the potter.
4. The privilege of cutting grass from fallow lands and of grazing cattle on them was enjoyed by the Kamin equally with the Zamindar owner.
5. They were allowed to collect dry sticks and branches of trees for fuel without interference.
6. The Kamins had the customary rights of gleaning the fields after the crop was cut and harvested.
7. During the sugarcane season any Kamin could obtain from the cultivator 4 to 6 sticks of cane, a drink of juice and a quarter or half seer of gur, at least twice.
8. From time to time the Kamins were given fodder and vegetables grown by the cultivators.
9. They also had the right to use the burial grounds free.

The Kamins did not necessarily confine themselves to their specialized craft or occupation. Those who had very few clients in the village which did not fetch them sufficient income, tried to get clients in the nearby village, but they did not move out of the village where their families have lived for generations on the residential site given by the Zamindars. Alternatively the work required of a Kamin might have left him with free time, consequently all Kamins, whether by necessity or because of spare time or spare hands, developed secondary occupations which were consistent with their traditional one and served the needs of the community. Thus, the potter besides making pottery used his donkey as a pack animal for transporting goods and burnt bricks for house construction. The carpenter besides making and mending ploughs and doing wood work for persian wheel, made cots and other household furniture and did general carpentry for house construction. In the village Tehong, Jullunder district, surveyed by the Punjab Board of Economic Enquiry in 1931, for instance, it was found that 6 shoemakers and 3 potters were working as weavers, 2 washermen as tailors, a waterman as a money lender and

mason, 2 more watermen and tailors and a weaver as both weaver and dyer. As Darling⁸⁹ has noted “in so caste ridden a country as India, this fluidity of occupation is surprising, but the Punjab north of Sutlej (apart from Himalayas) is much less influenced by Hindustan than rest of India and occupation and tribe are more important than caste with which, however they are co-ordinated.”

During the busy agricultural season all Kamins in the village, except the Barber and Mirasi, provided helping hands in the fields. At any stage of work whenever the zamindar needed extra help, he could count upon his Kamins to work in his fields at least one day during each seasonal crop and paid them for extra service in grain at harvest, in addition to customary dues.

While the Kamin-service system has been mistakenly equated to a system of inequality, the zamindar-Kamin relation has been relegated to the category of master and servant. In olden days the Kamin were in complete subjection to their “masters”. “The fear of ejection from the village was a yoke which kept the Kamin’s head bowed and only those who owned their houses could dare to assert themselves”. But this did not mean that the “servant” was ill-treated. “If the zamindar was the master, he was also the patron and if he stood above, he also stood behind his servant”. In a sense the Kamin system obliterated the dichotomy between master and servant. “It is based on the principle which we, from a modern angle would call the reversibility of master-servant paradigm. This means that a master feels as much dependant on the servant as the latter does on the former, and each has his own prestige which the other can upset beyond a certain limit at risk.”⁹⁰ Both the zamindar and Kamin were dependant partners in agriculture which was the means of their livelihood. For most of zamindars, the land was important for what it produced and not as a source of power over Kamins, laborers and tenants.

6.3.3. The Types of Kamins.

The different types of Kamins found in different districts of the Punjab including Haryana and Himachal Pradesh as gleaned through the different district Gazetteers compiled from 1883 onwards are listed below in table No. 6.3.3(1). Considering the different types of Kamin in respect of their variation between

89. Wisdom and waste in the Punjab village, Humphery Milford, Oxford University Press, Bombay, 1934, p.271.

90. Ishwaran K., Tradition and Economy in Village India, Allied Publishers, Pvt. Ltd., Bombay, 1966, p.38.

districts, it was found that the first 9 types listed in the table were universally represented in all districts. While these may be taken as “core” set of Kamins, the rest constituted “peripheral” Kamins, showing variation between districts. The categorization into “core” and “peripheral” is a borrowal again from J.W. Elder’s study of Rajapur in U.P.⁹¹ He categorizes “the hereditary relationships between two or more families in which periodically gross quantities of grain are exchanged for recurrent services or products by Kamins as core set of artisans and menials” and others who also entered the exchange relationships of service as non-core or peripheral Kamins. We do not have necessary data to classify whether a given Kamin is appointed on hereditary basis or not, nor do we have the information that he is included in the village document *Wajib-ul-arz* as a Kamin. What we get from the district Gazetteer is the district level listing of Kamins with their duties and customary grain dues. A Kamin by definition is one who resides in the village and renders regular service of his traditional occupation by hereditary custom for which he receives a certain share of the produce. Further, we have evidence of Kamins attaching themselves to zamindars. A listing of such Kamins from all the districts of Punjab aggregatively, we presume, takes care of the hereditary relation and exchange of regular service in return for grains produced.

The carpenter (Tarkhan \ Khati) and blacksmith (Lohar) were Kamins universally found in the Punjab villages. But it is impossible to separate blacksmiths from carpenters as in some parts, the same artisan Kamin often followed both the occupations. While the blacksmith was rarely employed on Chahi or well lands as he was not concerned with the up keep of the well and its apparatus, his services besides the customary ones of making and mending agricultural implements, on the sugarcane press assume importance. Among village carpenters there were two types: 1. Those who work for wages on piece rate and 2. Those who work as kamin or sepi in the village following their traditional occupation of carpentry. The carpenter’s main duties were to prepare and repair the Persian wheel and wooden implements of husbandry. While he prepared and repaired some of the wooden implements as a part of his customary work as kamin, for other work such as the cart, the Persian wheel, sugarcane press, the door and window frames of houses and generally house construction carpentry, he charged separately.

91. Change and Continuity in India’s Villages, ed. Ishwaran K., Colombia University Press, New York, 1970, pp. 105-127.

**Table No. 6.3.3 : List of Kamins in Eastern Punjab
(including Haryana and H. P.).**

1. Carpenter	Tarkhan	Khati	Barhani.	
2. Blacksmith.	Lohar			
3. Leather worker.	Chamar	Mochi.		
4. Potter.	Kumhar	Ghumar.		
5. Sweeper.	Scavenger	Chuhra	Dhanak.	
6. Barber.	Nai / Hajam			
7. Water carrier.	Jhinwar	Kahar	Saqqa	Mehara.
8. Washerman, Dyer and Calico printer and Tailor.	Dhobi Darji / Chimpi.	Chimba	Rangrez	Nilgar.
9. Bard, Drummer, Jester and Astrologer.	Mirasi	Dum	Bhat	Bharai.
10. Oil presser.	Teli			
11. Weaver.	Julha			
12. Gold / Silver smith.	Sunnar			
13. Wool felter.	Gadriya			
14. Cotton carder and teaser.	Bhunya	Penja		
15. Muslim priest etc.	Mullah			
16. Hindu priest etc.	Brahmin	Panda	Purohit.	
17. Beggars.	Fakir	Jogi		
18. Cowherd.	Pali.			
19. Village watchman and Messenger	Barwala	Rakhia	Balahi.	
20. Harvesting staff Reaper Winnow of grain. Fireman at sugarcane press.	Lawa. Odawa Jokha			
Cotton Picker.	Choni			
Crop Watcher.	Muhassal / Heri.			
Weighman.	Tolla.			

The sepi carpenter who was under a contractual relation with the zamindar or cultivator was under obligation to repair his master's implements and supply new ones when needed. The necessary raw material was provided by the zamindar. Every cultivator, whether owner or tenant with whom the sepi carpenter had contracted, had to pay his dues and one who did the work of both carpentry and smithy (Lohara) was paid double dues.

The sepi carpenters were mostly retained on Chahi or well lands. Such cultivators owning or leasing in land, which was worked from, one well combined to have one sepi carpenter. Thus if there were, say 3 share holders having equal shares in a well, each of them gave one third of the agreed dues at each harvest. As it often happens that only a few shareholders in well-cultivated kharif crops and in such cases, they alone pay the full share of the sepi at kharif. If such land was cultivated under batai (share rent) the sepi's share was paid from the common heap before division.

The potter (Kumhar) was of importance only in villages where the Persian wheel was used, for his supply of earthen pots (tind) for the wheel; otherwise he provided only the household crockery, if he was not burning bricks. In villages with un-irrigated (Barani) lands the potter was mostly not engaged as a Kamin and the carpenter only got the customary dues at harvest. If the potter was functioning as a Kamin in a village, he was required to supply earthen vessels free of charge to all proprietors and the camping government officials, for which he was paid customary dues per plough at each harvest by all the proprietors of the village. The rates varied very much between villages and were not fixed at all. They earned money by letting their donkeys on hire and burning bricks.

On Chahi land the Kumhar used to be a very important village artisan as he had to provide earthen pots for the Persian wheel. In such cases he was paid as much as a carpenter, including his services for supplying household pottery. With the replacement of the earthen pots by ironed buckets for Persian wheel, the work of Kumhar as a Kamin was no longer required and people bought for cash or grain such household pottery they required. The Kumhar was thus restricted to his donkey.

Among the domestic servants the barber (Nai) was a Kamin universally found in the villages of the Punjab, as elsewhere, not only as a tonsorial servant, but also in, very many other ways, which need not be catalogued here. The great class of watermen, from whom it is impossible to separate cooks and bakers

and grain parchers, were essentially fishermen. The water carrier fisherman and cook was known as Jhinwar or Kahar in eastern Punjab and Macchi when a Muslim, in the center and the west. Except in the west, he was essential and was given a leading place amongst village servants. The Rajputs with their Purdah rigours and the high caste ways would have more servants of this class than Jats or Sainis with their high standard of industry and frugality. The washerman (Dhobi), the tailor (Darji), the calico-printer (Chimba), the dyer (Nilari, Rangrez) constituted a group separated only by distinction of occupation, which were more often combined by the same person and when all are combined such a person was known as Charoha.

The Chamar known as Ramdasia when Sikh and Mochi when Muslim was a great leather working caste and in east Punjab it took the same part in field work as Chuhra in the center, where it formed a largest proportion of the population. The leather working castes, it has been noted, so often abandon their another hereditary occupation of weaving, especially when Sikh or Muslim, that it is impossible to separate the two classes. The Chuhras in the central Punjab took a very large share in the village labour organization. While the Chuhra is the village sweeper and scavenger, the Chamar is both tanner and leather worker, who not only skins zamindar's cattle and livestock, but also supplies him with shoes, ox-goads, and thongs. Both are the chief agricultural labourers of the Punjab villages.

The Chamars were generally known as "Begari" and found attached to every village, for the zamindars could not get on without them. They were bound to perform certain tasks (Begari) for the zamindar and receive allowances of grain and all the carcasses of the fallen animals. They could not change their place of residence, for a Chamar of one village was not allowed to settle down in another. As leather workers, tanning the skins of fallen cattle given to them, making leather buckets (charsa) for wells, Bihistis, Mashaks (water bags), shoes ox-goads, thongs etc. While they were paid for all new articles supplied, repairs were included in their tasks.

Generally, by mutual agreement between the proprietary body of zamindars and the Chamars of the village a number of zamindars were allotted to each Chamar and the zamindar had to get his work done by the Chamar allotted to him. This connection could not be broken till the crops of the current year were harvested, but it could be terminated from either side by mutual agreement. The Chamars

were generally attached to one zamindar or a few families of zamindars, and were not at the disposal of everyone.⁹² In a similar way Karnal District Gazetteer (1883-1884)⁹³ noted three types of Chamars got distributed at the beginning of the year for the 'Lanas' (i.e. the group cultivators working on a well to irrigate the fields) and households, by lots. Each lana then agrees with its Chamars whether they will be "Kamai ke", "Begar ke" or "Sarkari Begar ke".

"The kamai or lana ka Chamar received either a 28th or 21st part of the grain produced on the lana.. and for this he provides an able-bodied man to be always at work in the fields. Further, he makes and mends all the boots and leather articles needed for the lana." "The Begar ka Chamar receives a 40th or 41st part of the produce of grain and for this he provides a man to work on the field, whenever a special work is in hand, such as weeding harvesting etc. He gives two pairs of boots a year for the ploughman and two for the woman who brings food to the field for him. He also provides one ox-whip and a leather rope to fix the yoke and does all the necessary mending and repair of leather goods." "The Sarkari Begar ka Chamar takes 80th or 81st part of the grain produced and for this he gives 'Nakra' (ox-whip) and 'Santa' (leather rope) half yearly, mends shoes etc. and does government Begar". It is not necessary to list similar variants involving the Chamars in their traditional occupation of shoe mending etc., and agricultural work, which was generally known as "Kirsani Kamini" system⁹⁴

Considering the sweeper and scavenger Chuhra who ranked lower than Chamar, he generally took the place of Chamar. As an artisan he also worked in leather, but was employed on other duties as well. He received the dead cattle, ran errands, carried loads to next village when needed, attended on government officials who visit the village, swept the lanes and removed impurities. He moreover, assisted in agricultural operations such as weeding, winnowing etc. He supplied leather thongs and ropes as well as leather buckets and shoes and was responsible for their repair.

It is not that all Chuhras performed all the duties listed above. In many cases when Chamars and Chuhras were not retained as Kamin, they were employed when

92. Agricultural wages in India, vol. 1, Govt. of India, New Delhi, 1952, p.252. Also Rohtak District Gazetteer. P.136.

93. Also see the discussion by Commander S. "the Jajmani system in North India...etc. Modern Asian Studies, vol. 70,1983, p.297 and 302.

94. Agricultural wages in India, op.cit. p. 251.

needed and paid by the job. In such cases they did not have the right to the dead cattle or anything except the agreed wages.

There were two types of Chuhra, when they worked as Kamin, viz.: Chuhra Athri and Chuhra Sepi. The Chuhra Athri was a personal servant of the zamindar, employed entirely at the fields and did all the hardest work that the zamindar was wont to do. He was in fact an attached farm servant and as such he could rarely work for more than one zamindar family. On the other hand Chuhra Sepi served two or more families as the scavenger of the house and byre. He made dung cakes, attended the cattle, ran errands and made himself generally useful. When employed for agricultural work he got daily food and grains at fixed rates at harvest. It is interesting and important to note that Chuhras often sold and mortgaged to each other the right to perform services in, and take the perquisites from certain houses. Of course the masters of these houses must perforce accept these changes thus made for no one else would do the work if the right has been mortgaged to a particular Chuhra.⁹⁵

Looking to the table again, in respect of other functionaries, while Sunar or goldsmith was in the villages as much a pawn broker, moneylender as a craftsman, Teli (oil presser) could hardly be separated from Penja (cotton carder) and the Quasab (butcher). All three occupations were commonly pursued by the same person. These three along with the Julha (weaver) and Sunar are not technically Kamin and are generally paid (not always) by the piecework in grain or cash. For instance the Rohtak District Gazetteer noted that, for Dhanak (weaver) no grain dues were fixed as a rule, who either received the remuneration for the cloth he weaves or else renders much the same service as Kahar does for some due. Similarly the District Gazetteer of Gurgaon (1910), Karnal (1883-1884) and Hosiarpur (1883-1884) reported that Teli (oil presser), Gadariya (wool felter), Julha (weaver), Rangrez (Dyer), Chipi (calico printer), Darji (tailor), Sunnar (goldsmith), Bhunya \ Penja (cotton carder), Bhat (genealogist) had no defined rights and obligations like Kamins and no fixed grain allowances but were paid by the job, or work done or service actually rendered. Their customary practice was to retain in lieu of payment some portion of the new material given to them to work upon or received a weight of grain equal to that of the material.

95. Gazetteer of the Hosiarpur District, 1883-4, pp. 69-71. And Lucas E.D., *The Economic Life of a Punjab Village being a study of Kabirpur*, submitted for the Degree of doctor of philosophy, Columbia University. 1919, Mimeo, pp. 68-74.

According to the Revenue Department and the Punjab Board of Economic Enquiry the Brahmin priest and Mullah are treated as village servants. As Darling notes⁹⁶, the Jats insist that “the Brahmins were Kamin and not zamindars like themselves, and although Sikhism is closely allied to Hinduism, that is the view that Jat Sikhs generally take. In the Hindu villages which are mostly found south of Sutlaj or up to the Chenab in and along the Himalayas, the position is different and he plays his traditional part as temple priest or family priest. As such he is treated by the zamindars as an equal and in the Hindu districts of Kangra, he shares with the Rajput a superiority over all others and is greeted with salutations.” “The Mullah on the other hand is everywhere definitely amongst village servants, unless he is Moulavi and learned in scriptures.”

About the core Kamins identified above as regular village servants it may be noted that while the number and type of Kamins who serve the village community depended upon its size and situation, a small village will not have enough work for a Kamin of each type. Further all the nine core types will not be found attached to every zamindar. While those of higher standing may require all the nine types and more, those of the lower standing may employ only the carpenter the blacksmith and generally a Chamar and a Nai, so that it is difficult to discover any hard and fast rule regarding the number of Kamins and the share of the produce appropriated by them.

While the custom between villages is so variable that generalizations about village servants can have only the broadest application, it is significant to note that besides self-sufficiency, the number of Kamins found in a village reflects the standard of comfort and general prosperity of the zamindars. The obverse of this is tellingly put by the Karnal District Gazetteer (1883-1884) ⁹⁷ that “nothing is thought to be so effective an assertion of poverty of a village as to say that Kamins have left it.”

The emergence of a set of Kamin families in any village has historically contended with two opposing tendencies, namely the social, satisfying the comfort and status of zamindar families, and the economic, particularly the “carrying capacity” of the village. While the social status and prestige of the zamindar depended on the size of his holding, a zamindar having more land had more power and influence because he had more tenants and Kamins attached to his land, work

96. *Wisdom and Waste...* op.cit. P.264.

97. p. 136.

for him and depend on him. This tendency on the part of zamindar to run after power and prestige, besides comfort in domestic living caused him to engage very many types of Kamin, which was considered to be an index of his prosperity and social prestige.

The cost of maintaining a large retinue of Kamin by the zamindar was earlier charged to the common grain heap. But with the onset of fixed land revenue system of assessment, the government objected to the large deductions from the grain heap as wages or customary dues paid to the Kamins.⁹⁸ While the change on account of customary dues of Kamins on the common grain heap got reduced, in actuality the tradition of engaging various types of Kamins continued as before, the grain dues being paid by the zamindars from the divided grain heap. The village servants' existence was commonly taken for granted.

6.3.4. The Sepidar System.

We earlier noted that different Kamins "attach" themselves to different cultivating families of the village. While Kamin is a general term referring to all landless artisans and menials who earn their livelihood by supplying goods and services to the village community, a Sepi \ Sepidar is a Kamin "attached" under contract to a zamindar for supply of goods and services in return for a share of the biannual harvest as a part of hereditary relationship originally formed under various circumstances in the long history of the settlement of the village. Ibbetson⁹⁹ equates Sepis to Halis or ploughmen attached to the zamindars.

Before we discuss the system let us scan our data sources to find out what the Sepidar system means. While we get some information about the Sepidars in about six of the Punjab Gazetteer, four of them merely refer to Chuhra Sepi who is the household stable servant of the zamindar. Some information is available in the Sialkot District Gazetteer (1894). It notes that "a large proportion of the village usually consists of a class of Kamin or Sepi which includes farm hands and artisans each section of whom have well defined duties to perform and recognized tariff of wage". It further notes that "the word Sep was originally a general term for the work of all these dependants but is now indifferently applied to both duty and remuneration. The relations of Kamins with landowners are regulated by

98. For a Criticism of this method of deductions see Amritsar District Gazetteer, vol. 13 A., p. 151.

99. Punjab Castes, p.330.

immemorial custom but they are now going through intense population pressure, spread of education and acceptance of Christianity of the lower and most numerous sections.” The Lahore District Gazetteer description is remuneration based and it notes that “the village servants are paid by the zamindar usually in grain at the time of harvest in return for work performed during a preceding half year. This system is called Sep and its recipients are Sepis.” Similarly, the Ferozepur District Gazetteer noting that “the dues of village servants (Kamin) are deducted from the common stock before the division of the proprietor’s share is made”, it lists the complement of Sepidars (Kamin) as Tarkhan, Lohar, Kumhar and Chuhra. Chicherov A.¹⁰⁰ also noted that “the system of payment to village community artisans, the traditional share of harvest from the field is called Sep or Vand.” Besides the Lahore District gazetteer he has referenced Hosiarpur and Jullunder District Gazetteer to substantiate. The Jullunder District Gazetteer terms Sepis as village menials (Glossary) and contrary to Kessinger’s¹⁰¹ finding in Vilayatpur of the said district notes that “in many cases Chamars and Chuhras are not retained as village servants (Sepi) but are employed when needed and paid by the job. In such cases they have no right to dead cattle or anything except wages agreed on.” As regards the term Vand, Chicherov has not given any reference, but we have noticed it in the Punjab Board’s survey of Haripur and Mangra¹⁰² talukas of the Himalayan district, Kangra where it stands for dues paid in kind given at harvest time. Similarly Kessinger¹⁰³ defines Sepidar as “an artisan, servant or laborer who provides goods and services to a land owning patron in return for a share of biannual harvest as part of an hereditary relationship.”

From the above it becomes clear that Sepis \ Sepidars constituted a special group of Kamins or village menials including laborers retained by zamindars who were paid in grain at harvest from the undivided grain heap as their share. As regards laborers¹⁰⁴ included in the group it may be noted, the predominant one was the Hali or the attached farm servant as ploughman who had neither a share

100. India: Economic Development in the 16th, 18th centuries: Outline History of Crafts and Trade. Moscow, 1971 (original Russian edition 1965), p.27.

101. His 1848 A.D. data contained the following Sepidars in Vilayatpur: Chamar, Tarkhan, Chiir (water carrier), Nai, Chuhra and Sonihar (goldsmith). See his Vilayatpur 1848-1968 A.D., University of California press, Berkeley, 1974, p.55.

102. Publication no. 9, Board of Economic Enquiry, Punjab, 1933, p.11

103. Vilayatpur, op.cit. p.56

104. Since farm laborers are not Kamin our discussion excludes Sepidar laborers.

in the land nor in the plough cattle but a share of about one fifth of the grain produced. Besides the Hali, the Chamar and Chuhra in addition to their duties as Kamin used to work on the farm as laborers.

From the village surveys carried out by the Punjab Board of Economic Enquiry we note the following. The glossary attached to the village survey of Jamalpur Sheikhan (Hissar district 1926) gives the following meanings: Sep is "the customary service by the lower ranks of the village to the landlord and Sepi is the person entering into contract for Sep." Similarly the village survey of Suner (Ferozepur District 1936) by the same board, described Sepi as "a menial who assists in the cultivation or an artisan who supplies agricultural implements in a certain manner for an annual customary payment in kind." Though the above definitions or descriptions are general, they seem to be imprecise to an extent that they fail to bring out the *differentia specifica* of the special group of Kamin known as Sepi \ Sepidar. The following delineation and discussion of the Sepidar system by us is mostly based on Zekiye Eglar's¹⁰⁵ book "A Punjabi Village in Pakistan".

According to Eglar while Sep means a contract, the contracting parties are Sepi to each other. A Kamin working as a Sepi with his zamindar patron had well defined duties and obligations to perform and received customary payments at harvest. Every zamindar family in the village had established a contract with a family each of the different types of Kamins (artisans and menials) as per his requirements. The Sepis so retained were "Ghar Da Kammi" or "family Kamins", as the Bairampur (Hosiarpur district) survey (1922) of the Punjab Board noted, and were of two descriptions: 1. Those who helped in cultivation of land, 2. Domestic menials (Khangī Kamin). While the set of Sepi retained of the first description were Tarkhan, Lohar, Kumhar and Chuhra those of the second description were Nai, Dhobi, Jhinwar and Chamar.

An important aspect of the Sepidar system that has been badly missed by the gazetteers and surveys, confining it only to the special group having Sep relationship between zamindar and Kamin is the fact that Kamins also had Sep contracts among themselves on the model of their zamindar. For example a potters family would have a Sep with a Barber, Carpenter, Water carrier or Sweeper.

105. Columbia University Press, New York, 1960, p. 35ff.

Usually Sep relationships between two families were established more than a generation ago and were inherited by families of respective Sepis. As Darling¹⁰⁶ has noted “when any Sepi dies his Sep is divided amongst his sons as surely as a zamindar’s land is amongst his sons”. Similarly a certain zamindar family inherits a Sep with a set of families of “Ghar Da Kammi” whose fore fathers had been Sepis of the ancestors of the zamindar family. Thus partnership in a Sep continued for generations. Although a barber, for instance, of a certain generation might not have satisfied his Sepi, nevertheless his contract would not be broken, nor would his Sepi changed to another barber. It was a matter of honor and dignity to both partners to maintain the long-standing relationship. So, the nature of relationship between the Sepis was not merely economic in which services and payments were equated on quid pro quo basis. It was rather a social and moral relationship whose obligations were felt by both the parties- the zamindar and his Ghar Da Kammi- who developed close and lasting bonds that were not easily broken.

As Mckim Marriot¹⁰⁷ has observed “there is a real value in calling attention to the intimate or emotional attitudes which give permanency to relations between menials and clients in service system- attitudes which may exist between persons despite and apart from crude questions of economic status. Some pairs may share symmetrical attitudes towards one another, an appropriate example is the one cited of mutual dependency between potter and carpenter, two artisans who stand about the mid way in rank hierarchy and who practiced technically elaborate crafts. However asymmetrical attitudes can rather be expected to pervade most service relationships since the majority of menial-client pairs involve persons of markedly different economic, ritual status. The people who are conceived to be permanent clients of the potter and barber are not all the people of the village, but only those who are cultivators. Payment is legally graded and specified according to the number of client’s plough or oxen. The people whose life style requires the courtly obsequies of the barber and the removal of bloody pollution by midwife and washerman are not all of the castes but only the higher ones. The need that gives permanency here is neither technical nor symmetrical... studies of the whole system show that the lower caste and landless laborers receive few special services from outside their own group. In Wiser’s study as in so many others, the lower groups pass largely out of the pattern of stable exchanging pairs.”

106. *Wisdom and Waste...* op. Cit. P. 261.

107. “Village Structure and the Punjab Govt.; a restatement,” *American Anthropologist*, vol. 55. No.1, 1953, p.140.

As already noted, the Kamins in turn had Sep relations with a number of other Kamins. Thus a potter may have Sep with a few barbers, a few Jhinwars and carpenters besides a few zamindars. But among these Sepis he had one barber, one Jhinwar, one cobbler and one sweeper, for example, whose services he required throughout the year and who were the ones to have special duties on ceremonial occasions in his house and to receive the Lags or customary gifts received by house Kamin from the family celebrating some important event. These are his "Ghar Da Kammi".

In a Sep neither the payment nor the amount of work the Kamin was called upon to do was discussed and negotiated by the zamindar and Kamin. While the Kamin knew approximately how much of his work a particular household required and both knew well the quantum of customary payment. But even though the zamindar did not actually require the work of his Ghar Da Kammi, yet he made a minimum payment to these retained Kamin and the relationship between the Sepis was maintained. However the Kamins who had a Sep among themselves did not pay the minimum to their Sepi if they did not happen to require his services. But the relationship between the two was maintained as Sepis. Maximum services of all Ghar Da Kammi were required on ceremonial occasions especially at marriage for which these Sepis received Lag or customary presents of money, clothes, food, grains, sweets etc. However in respect of "Vartan Bhanji"¹⁰⁸ the Punjabi system of gift exchange involving a wide range of relationships among various groups in the society- this gift exchange relationship was not fully maintained between the zamindar and his Sepis as their social relationship were not based on reciprocity of service and payment. But the degree of relationship of Vartan Bhanji depended on intimacy existing between two households.

A Kamin working as a Sepi was entitled to a share in the crops at different harvests. While the amount of crop he received varied with the work done and the condition of the harvests, during an abundant harvest the zamindar paid over and above the customary rate. But when the crop was poor the zamindar could not be

108. For a detailed exposition of Vartan Bhanji system see Zekiye Eglar, A Punjabi village in Pakistan, op.cit., p. 105ff. In this context it is necessary to note Newell's interpretation of the custom of "Birton" in his study "Goshen": A Gaddi village in the Himalayas, in India's villages, ed. Shrinivas M.N. op.cit. pp. 51-61. Birton which means ceremonial gift or labor exchange has been interpreted as Jajmani of U.P., which is unwarranted. Birton is nothing but Vartan Bhanji custom. Help given by those under Birton relationships is an activity where group work is essential is Mang, a custom also prevalent in Punjab.

so lavish. In a year when the crop was destroyed, the Sepi had to wait for compensation at the next harvest.

The Kamins of the service exchange group who had Sep relations with other Kamin also paid in grain. For instance while the potter paid his Sepidar barber in grain according to the number of heads trimmed during the year, the barber in turn paid the potter in grain whenever he got pots from him. But for any life cycle ceremony the barber was called in and on these occasions he, his wife and his mother were given clothes, cotton blankets, grain, money and sweets. If the potter thought that he has over compensated on these occasions, the imbalance in exchange was corrected by additional service.

The above system thus created an intense and intricate network of exchange of services and distribution of grain produced within a village by closely tying in every zamindar and Kamin, who got assured supply of services on the one hand and ensured a means of livelihood on the other. Besides, it created a strong web of intimate social, moral, egalitarian, interfamilial relationships in the village. Each zamindar was at the center of the network of dyadic relationships with the Sepidar and others such as tenants and farm laborers which taken together integrated the village community and formed an organization for most of its economic activity. But the relationships were asymmetrical. The Sepi Kammi were always dependent on the zamindar for the grain they received in exchange for their services. The Sepidar system was central and vital feature of the village economy. But although most economic relationships were embedded in personal ties and all economic activity was compensated in grain at customary rates, not all artisans and menials in the village were part of the system. The Teli, Julha and the shopkeeper etc. did not have the same tie to the village as the Sepis.

We have already quoted Kessinger's¹⁰⁹ definition of Sepidar. He has further noted that Sepidar system "is Punjab's version of the Jajmani system, first reported by W.H. Wiser in his *The Hindu Jajmani System* and the subject of a substantial anthropological literature." He notes this in a footnote and does not elaborate. While the Sepidar system so much resembles the so-called Jajmani system, one doubts whether the latter development of Jajmani in U. P. is a copy of the original Sepidar system of the Punjab. One therefore, is tempted to view the uncanny resemblance comparatively. In this regard we have to underscore the following. While Jajmani system refers to village artisans and servants pursuing non-

109. Vilayatpur, op.cit., p56fn.

agricultural occupations only, the Sepidar system, in contrast covers the attached farm servants also, for example the Hali, ploughman, who under Jajmani system was kept out of its scope. This has been discussed by Breman, which we have already referred. We have also noted that the Sepidar system was not the result of a transformation of the type that gave rise to Jajmani relations in U. P. in the late 19th century. Probably the Sepidar relationships were already there at and around the foundation of the villages by the settlers of the Jat lineages. As noted by Kessinger, laborers and artisans either accompanied the settlers from the parent village or migrated from outside to take advantage of new opportunities. The artisans and servants, who accompanied the settlers owed allegiance to the tribal lineage rather than to the village. Probably it is these accompanying artisans and servants who were treated differently by the settling proprietors as Ghar da kammi, constituted the nucleus of the Sepidar group of kamins and were given house sites on their estates free of rent, though hedged with the condition that they should give all their manure that they accumulated.

Arguably, even if we equate the Sepidar system to the Jajmani, the former has co-existed with the village service kamin system, as all the necessary kamin types could not be affordably retained by each and every family in the village. Also neither Sepidari nor Jajmani were village-wide systems. Since services were need based, the differential needs of each family resulted in running relationships as also casual relationships with kamins. While the running relationship of the service was met by Sepidars, the casual ones were met by village service kamin who were engaged temporarily either on annual payments in kind or on piecework basis. In the operation of this two tier system the distinction between the village service kamin system and Sepidar (equated to Jajmani) system got blurred and there was no absolute certainty whether kamin were linked to the village as a whole or to the individual patron families. The distinction between two types of systems became conceptual as observed by Fuller and there was no isolable sphere of so-called Jajmani (equated to Sepidari) relationships that was independent of non Jajmani (Sepidari) relationships.

6.3.5. Grain Heap and Grain Dues of Kamins.

We have already noted that Kamins had a right to a share in the grain heap. When the gross produce of any estate was collected on the threshing floor for division, the first payments were made to the harvesters and Kamins, while the local charities and payments to shrines etc. came later. Under the former rulers

when land revenue was realized in kind, a portion of the whole produce was set aside for Kamins and this was distributed amongst them according to their recognized share and the remainder was divided between the cultivator and the government. But with the assessment system introduced by the colonial government, the earlier system could not continue except where a proprietor took kind rent from his tenant. With cash demand for land revenue, the old custom disappeared and the Kamins began to receive their grain allowances from the cultivating proprietors in many different ways. The share of the Kamins in the produce remained only a matter of custom and for record and it came to be paid as a specific measure of grain of fixed proportion of the harvest or a combination of both. For some the payment was made as percentage of the produce at each harvest, for some others by a "Kalak" or field allowance upon a plough or Persian wheel and for some others again, a fixed quantity of grain per annum was given and for the rest the grain dues were arbitrary and were not fixed. There was generally none of the elaborate division of the produce such as was customary, and even when the tenant paid his rent in kind, in some areas, no deductions were made for Kamins, but each party gave his kamin from his own house a fixed amount of the produce and not a share of the whole crop. In this connection the Ludhiana District Gazetteer (1904)¹¹⁰ noted: "the tendency was for the cultivators to alter their agreement with the Kamins and to cut allowances down. In fact these allowances are generally ceasing to be determined by custom". It further noted "there has been a tendency to break up the constitution of the village in regard to these menials, the action being mostly on the part of the proprietors, for the kamins are much too degraded to wish for any change and are in the power of the proprietors completely, not having the option of changing their abode when hard pressed. The result has been that the proprietors attempt to cut down allowances and make new terms to the Kamin. In many administration papers a condition has been recorded that the relation of the proprietors to Kamin is liable to annual revision and in some villages there are no customary allowances or services at all, and when a cultivator has any work to be done by one of the class he pays for it in grain or cash". Thus the traditional Kamin system went into a mess, drifted and disintegrated and was replaced first by a series of a yearly contracts and then by daily bargaining over wages to be paid in cash for certain jobs and piece work rates for others.¹¹¹

110. Part A, p. 147.

111. Kessinger, Vilayatpur, op.cit. p. 125.

As regards the mode of payment in the traditional Kamin system as recorded in the different district Gazetteers of the Punjab, after disappearance of the grain heap system we find that the most common method of payment of allowances to Kamins was on plough basis i.e. so many maunds / seers per plough at each harvest. The following Kamins usually received on per plough basis:

1. Carpenter (Tarkhan).
2. Blacksmith (Lohar).
3. Potter (Kumhar).
4. Leather worker (Chamar).
5. Water carrier (Jhinwar). And sometimes,
6. Sweeper (Chuhra).
7. Washerman (Dhobi)

with the components of the above list varying from district to district and village to village. It should be noted that the plough hal on which these allowances are generally calculated, described as “working plough” was a variable measure.

In the case of a Chahi or well-irrigated lands the produce payment was made to the Sepi carpenter who repaired the Persian wheel from the grain heap before division, the agreed quantity per wheel or per Mahal (estate) as per contract. When there were more share holders than one in the estate, each paid the Sepi according to his share in the ownership of the well. In the case of zamindari villages where the land was seldom divided according to shares of co-sharers, but profits only were so divided, the dues of the kamins were deducted from the common grain heap before the division of proprietor's share was made. In some districts, carpenter, blacksmith, potter, leather worker, water carrier, sweeper and barber were also paid on the basis of the percentage of the produce. In some other districts, a fixed quantity of grain per annum was paid to the potter, leather worker, water carrier and washerman, while the quantity so fixed varied between districts and between villages in the district. In some other districts again the customary dues of the potter, water carrier, sweeper, barber and washerman were not fixed and some arbitrary quantity of grain was paid to them for their services depending upon the condition of the crop and the generosity of the zamindar. In actual practice the dues of all kamins were adjusted according to the condition of the crop. In bad years of low prices and poor crops, the dues stood considerably below those prescribed in the village Wazib-ul-urz.

6.4.0. The Village Service System in the Eastern Zamindari Villages.

Having discussed the service system in the Northern Zamindari villages, we now present our studies of the Eastern Zamindari villages of Bengal, Bihar and Orissa. While all the three states had comprised severalty villages of peasant proprietorship, the zamindari system was super-imposed over them with the peasants becoming the tenants of the landlord. While the pre-existing village service system adapted for peasant proprietorship villages, broke down and disintegrated with the decay of village community in the case of Bengal, in the case of Bihar and Orissa though the old system was preserved, it was worked under the “manorial” influence of the zamindars. We begin with the disintegrated village service system of Bengal.

6.4.1 Villages, Village Communities and the Village Service System.

To start with, it is necessary and essential to understand the structure of Bengal village and the village system in its countryside, before we consider its village communities and the village service system. The village in Bengal generally consists of small isolated cluster of homesteads built without any arrangement or order, found scattered through rice and jute fields. The villagers lived more or less secluded in detached homesteads surrounded by a belt of trees, which secured privacy that the Bengali likes in his domestic life. Large compact villages where periodical markets were held were usually found on the banks of the rivers. So also the oldest villages were invariably found on the river banks or in the neighborhood where there were ridges of comparatively high land and enclosures. Moving toward further east, in the swamps of east Bengal (now Bangladesh) there often was no trace of the central village site and houses were found in straggling rows lining with high banks of rivers or in small cluster on maunds laboriously thrown up during dry months when water temporarily disappeared. Even if one defines such a cluster or a collection of homesteads as constituting a residential village it still remains indefinite and indeterminate for there are many collection of houses / homesteads which would by one person be called separate villages, while another will treat them as hamlets of other villages in the neighborhood. On the other hand the area based administrative Mouza comprising a parcel of land with defined boundaries and usually bearing the name of the main collection of houses found on it, is a definite unit, but does not necessarily correspond to the

residential village. The latter may spread over two Mouzas or two residential villages may lie in the same Mouza or the Mouza may be altogether uninhabited. Under the circumstance it is difficult to say what constitutes a village. In this regard the countryside of Bengal resembled more or less the rural area of Kerala, with its Desam constituting the administrative unit, and the Kara \ Tara constituting the residential unit.¹¹²

Since Settlement survey, while Mouza has been taken as a village for Census purposes¹¹³ the residential cluster of homesteads bearing a separate name was treated as a village historically. The absence of compact villages, however was not a bar to the creation of village community organization. While shops were almost absent in rural Bengal the houses of landlords and the few artisans and servants were interspersed among the homesteads. The cultivators' homesteads were closely packed together in some localities owing to the necessity of using to the full, for residential purposes, the little available high ground. Close connections in these parts were looked upon as uncomfortable places to live in, on account to the Bengali preference for privacy which appears to be a result than a cause for the ecological environment in which the residential village had got itself established. The Superintendent of 1921 Census¹¹⁴ noted that "there is no corporate life in such villages and the absence of villages in the ordinary sense has brought to rural Bengal absence of germs of corporate life, though it has avoided overcrowding".

The above discussion about the physical form and structure of the village in Bengal shows its inherent weakness towards the development of village communities so much so that E.A. Gait in his Report of 1901 Census¹¹⁵ observed that "the village organization with its complete outfit of artisans and servants who render it independently of outside help which is so common in other parts of India, never seems to have developed in the greater part of Bengal proper and there is often a great dearth of local craftsmen which is now being met by settlement of immigrants from Bihar. The upcountry Dhoba, for e.g. is now to be

112. Census of India, 1931, Travancore, vol. XXVIII., p. 73. Also Census of India 1921 Bengal vol. V. part I, p.126.

113. Census of India, 1911, vol. V., part I. P.41.

114. Op.cit., p.124.

115. Vol. I, part I, pp. 197-199. Also refr. Imperial Gazetteer of India, Provincial series, 1909, Vol. I, p.71.

found in almost all parts of Bengal". This does not mean that there was no village community organization in Bengal as the burden of Gait's statement falls in the post-disintegration period of the village community organization as the following statement by Wilson¹¹⁶ written a decade and half earlier makes it clear. He notes that "in Bengal and those parts of Hindustan where the village organization had been greatly disturbed by long period of Mohommedan rule, the establishment of the village officers and servants is less complete but the headman and the accountant are universally retained and more or fewer of the rest are found."

The Bengal District Gazetteer for Hooghly¹¹⁷ noted: "there is no detailed record of the Hindu system of land revenue administration in Bengal. It would appear that gram or village was the unit of administration and that, excluding the waste or uncultivable lands and lands occupied by houses or set apart for village commons, the village lands fell into two groups viz. those which paid rent and those which did not. The latter included the Brahmottar or land granted to Brahmins, Debottar or lands dedicated to gods and their worship and chakran or service lands. Among service lands may be enumerated those held by servants such as barbers, washermen, carpenters, smiths etc. besides watchmen and accountants whose duties to the community were directly connected with the land and its crops. The village servants also received small shares of the produce at the time of reaping or threshing."

While the above describes the normal village community with its service system of land grants and service payment in small shares of the produce as per the traditional model of community maintained artisans and servants, the dispersed nature of village settlements with a dense stipple of separate homesteads and insufficiently developed service system seems to have enhanced supra-local dependence which has often stood in the way of village unity despite intra-village inter-caste dependence¹¹⁸ for e.g. Hunter reported that in Bankura district¹¹⁹ the Kamar \ blacksmith worked for people in four or five villages and the Sutradhar \ carpenter worked for two or more villages. Similarly he reported that there was one blacksmith to every collection of two or three small villages in the 24-

116. Glossary of Judicial and Revenue Terms, op.cit., p.52.

117. Vol. XXIX., 1909, p.206.

118. Sengupta Symalkanti, The Social System in a Bengal village, Editions India, Calcutta, 1973, pp.7-10.

119. SAB., Vol. IV., pp.239-255.

Pargana.¹²⁰ Further for Midnapur district¹²¹ he reported that "it is not that a every village has a carpenter. These and other artisans are principally found in large villages. The Kamar \ blacksmith is more commonly found than the Sutradhar \ carpenter and his services were in greater demand." However, supra-local or inter-village dependence is not an exclusive characteristic of dispersed villages as it is also found in the case of nucleated villages. While in the latter it is not common, in the dispersed homestead villages the economic unity cuts across the village boundary and establishment of patron-client relationship binds a group of villages in to inter-village dependence. The economic unity thus gets modified by the extension of services to the neighboring villages. A dispersed homestead village receives services from other villages and offers service to others in the neighborhood, a feature not uncommon to nucleated villages.

In villages where functional interdependence of castes and division of labor lacks development in the structure of the village and depends on supra-local sources for services, such villages represent villages with incomplete socio-economic structure. Such villages can not be conceived as villages with a separate social system¹²². Only at the supra-local level caste hierarchy and functional interdependence has any real meaning. Perhaps, such villages may be acting complementary to others in a group, in a small relatively homogenous tract with larger or bazaar villages acting as a nucleus service center of commodity and service exchange, mutually dependant and beneficial. This reflects on the nature of the Bengal village community in the village defined as a residential cluster of homesteads.

However, in the context of the community maintained village service groups on the traditional model adopted by the Bengal villages, we do not know whether such groups were free to serve other village settlements. The traditional system was just the other way round on account of village service right (Birt \ Shashan) according to which each service caste enjoyed a monopoly of service within the limits of the village. On the one hand this village service right made sure a livelihood to the service groups within the jurisdiction of the village and on the other, the system guaranteed the availability of the requisite services within the jurisdiction

120. SAB., Vol. I., p.124.

121. SAB., Vol. III., pp. 317-322.

122. Breman J., Patronage and Exploitation, Changing Agrarian Relations in South Gujarat, op.cit., p.44.

of the village. But under the special conditions of Bengal village the above system of exclusive right of service seems to have got modified and out of necessity supra-local services have been permitted. Within the village, while inter-caste inter-dependence was visibly there, it did not involve the traditionally ordained and clear-cut rights and obligations, which Miller¹²³ observed in the villages of north Kerala. But as noted by Gait¹²⁴ “the Napit often enjoys the exclusive right to work for people in a recognized circle, but this is not the case with other servants and artisans”. However, we do not know whether this observation pertains to pre or post-disintegration of the village community and the village service system.

6.4.2. Development of Zamindari and Permanent Settlement.

Before we consider the disintegration of the village communities and the village service system, let us have a hurried peep in to the historical development towards Zamindari leading to the establishment of the revenue system of Permanent Settlement brought about by the Colonial government.

In the early Mughal times the only zamindars recognized were the territorial chiefs who were left in possession of territories on grounds of policy on the condition that they pay in to the imperial treasury a certain proportion of revenue collected from the villages under their charge. With this exception the ordinary revenue system was to collect a share of the produce from the cultivators through their headman and all the villages were severalty villages, unless they were held under a separate tenure under special grant. The Mughal land revenue system was essentially Raiyatwari and it went straight to the cultivator through the headman of each village.

With the decay of the Mughal power, the practice of revenue farming grew up and the ex-officials, court favorites and men of local influence who undertook to farm the revenue, generally acquired the name and position of zamindars. As the contributions to royal treasury tended to become fixed, the zamindars exploited new sources of income over and above the rental upon which their revenue was calculated. They acquired private lands, realized rent from wastelands, imposed cesses and levied dues on fisheries and tolls on markets etc. By degrees the zamindars’ office became hereditary and the practice of obtaining a fresh renewal

123. Miller E.J., Village Structure in North Kerala, in Shrinivas M.N. (Ed.), India’s Villages, op.cit., pp. 43-55. Also Sengupta S., op.cit., p. 10.

124. Census of India 1901, Vol. I, part I, report, pp. 197-99.

of the grant to succeed from the ruling power dropped in to desuetude.

Thus during the two centuries which followed Todarmal's Settlement, the farmer class of zamindars had acquired a position similar to that of original land holders and they were gladly recognized as proprietors of the soil by the Colonial government without questioning the proprietary title of the zamindars at the time Permanent Settlement.

Along with the "manorial rights" such as fisheries and the produce of fruits and jungle products and grazing, the zamindars levied a small fee called "Parjot" as in the Punjab and the U.P. on non-agricultural residence as a kind of ground rent for house sites occupied by them.

As noted by Ramakrishna Mukherjee¹²⁵ "the introduction of private property in land and landlordism as well as the simultaneous disintegration of the village community, created havoc in the life of peasants, artisans and traders in Bengal. In particular the artisans were made to work for the East India Company and in consequence they were forced to give up their age-old profession and live as peasants in rural areas. Moreover the peasants were so oppressed by the ever-increasing demand of land-tax that in less than a quarter of a century Bengal known for her rich cultivation was partly turned in to a wild forest". "In spite of such ravages" he continues "done in Bengal in the second half of the 18th century, the village community system had not fully disintegrated but when, with the introduction of Permanent Zamindari Settlement of land in 1793 AD. Landlords were created and the concept of private property in land fully established, the village community system was lost forever".

6.4.3. Disintegration of Village Communities.

While Ramakrishna Mukherjee ascribes the disintegration of village community in Bengal to the permanent zamindari system Baden Powell puts it a little earlier in time ascribing it to the ravages of later Mughal administration of revenue farming and the development of zamindar class out of them. Earlier in chapter 3 while discussing the theme of disintegration of village community system at the all India level, we have referred to the above difference of opinion between historians. In any case, sooner or later, the disintegration phenomenon was a well-known historical fact, which had set in at two related levels. The first was the

125. The Dynamics of Rural Society, a study of economic structure in Bengal villages, Akademie-Verlag, Berlin, 1957, pp. 27-29.

administration of the village which bypassed the earlier indigenous system and the second was the gradual disintegration of the communal institutions, particularly the village service system of community maintained village artisans and servants.

Hunter¹²⁶ writing in 1885 found that “the ancient indigenous village system... has almost disappeared. The traces that remain are scanty. In some places the village Panchayats or conferences exists, but they are being supplanted by municipal institutions, law courts and influence of landlords. The village headman has still however a recognized position in rural community although denuded of his authoritative powers.”

In his earlier compilation of ‘Statistical Account of Bengal’ in 1877 he noted in different volumes aspects of gradual disintegration in different districts of Bengal as that process could not be simultaneous and uniform throughout. We list below extracts from the above work to illustratively bring out some significant aspects of disintegration of the village community system in different parts of rural Bengal.

In Birbhum district¹²⁷ Hunter found “the indigenous village corporations of the Hindu system still retain considerable vitality although the authority of village officials has greatly decreased of late years”. In the same vein he wrote about Midnapore district¹²⁸, “in a purely rural district of Midnapore the indigenous village corporations still retain their ancient vitality... There is not a single village in the district, which has not its regularly constituted headman... At the present time the influence (of the headman) has much decreased especially near towns where English courts are easily accessible. They are to a great extent and throughout the district mere creatures of zamindars”. Thirty-four years later, in 1911, Midnapore District Gazetteer¹²⁹ vouched Hunter’s observation. It also noted that “the indigenous village system has lost nearly all its vitality and is now only represented by the village headman. They too have lost their power and influence they once possessed and at present are to a great extent and throughout almost the whole of the district, merely creatures of the zamindar”. By the time the Gazetteer wrote, the village community had lost its ancient vitality which Hunter had observed to be existing in 1877 AD.

126. Imperial Gazetteer of India, 1885, vol. II., p.296.

127. SAB., Vol. IV., p. 343.

128. SAB., Vol. III., pp. 317-19.

129. P. 72.

At the same time writing about Hooghly and Howrah districts, Hunter¹³⁰ noted that Mandals, Fouzdars and Bakshi had all become remnants of the old village and rural police organization which “has, however, become so impaired... from neglect that no definite use could be made of them... the title has degenerated in to a mere surname.” He further noted that “the Mandals are rapidly losing their influence and are being supplanted by the Gumashta and Pradhan” and ascribed causes of this decline. “The causes of this decline as well as other village institutions”, he noted “are first, a systematic neglect of such agencies by the government, second, the growing power of the zamindars, third, the decreasing need of such agencies occasioned by the introduction of regular police, a strong government and multiplication of administrative subdivisions”.

In the 24 Paragana and Sunderban area Hunter¹³¹ found that “in the vicinity of towns the influence of English courts has greatly affected the ancient village corporations. In the most sequestered parts, the whole internal organization of the village is in the hands of few influential men who hold their offices by hereditary right or are selected by the people themselves. The principal officer is the Mandal or village headman... The present decline in their position appears to be the result rather of our (i.e. British) system of administration than of encroachment... It is in purely rural tract that the Mandal retains his power. The influence and powers of these headmen is in proportion to the distance of these villages from the towns, high roads and water ways”.

From the above series of quotations limited to west Bengal districts, the picture that emerges of the cause and course of the cancerous disease of disintegration of the self-governing peasant village community system in its political or administrative aspect in different areas of west Bengal is sufficiently clear and needs no further elaboration.

6.4.4. Village Servants and the Disintegration of the Village Service System.

Before we consider the theme of the disintegration of the village service system let us note the different types of artisans and servants working in the Bengal villages as village servants. In table no. 6.4.4.(1) we have presented a general list of artisans and servants as noted by Hunter in his Statistical Account of Bengal

130. SAB., Vol. III., p.268.

131. SAB., Vol. I., p. 124.

in 1877 and later by Bengal District Gazetteers for west Bengal. Possibly the list pertains to the post-disintegration period of the village communities.

Table no. 6.4.4 (1) Village Artisans and Servants of West Bengal

1.	Chuttar \ Sutradhar.	Carpenter.
2.	Kamar.	Blacksmith.
3.	Kumhar.	Potter.
4.	Napit.	Barber.
5.	Dhoba.	Washerman.
6.	Mali \ Malakar.	Florist, Gardener.
7.	Purohit.	Priest.
8.	Ganak \ Acharjya.	Astrologer.
9.	Gunin \ Guru.	Exorcist.
10.	Guru \ Gosain.	Spiritual guide.
11.	Dom.	Musician and Basket maker.
12.	Swarnakar.	Goldsmith.
13.	Kansari.	Metal worker.
14.	Patidar.	Weaver.
15.	Mahajan.	Grain dealer and Moneylender.
16.	Agalda.	Field watcher.
17.	Bagal.	Village cowherd.

Source. Hunter's Statistical Account of Bengal and Bengal District Gazetteer Volumes.

Without going into the details of nature of services of each, the first 8 of the table who are described as “notables” constituted the core village servants comprised in the village service system, while others of the list were peripheral. But one very conspicuous feature of the list is the absence of Muchi \ Charmakar or Leather worker and Hari or scavenger. These were not found mentioned in our sources.

We have already referred to the basic aspects of the village service system prevalent in Bengal villages prior to the development of zamindari over raiyatwari system of land tenure in the severalty villages and the disintegration of the village communities, which had maintained the service system. As the village community disintegrated the village “notables” of the village service system ceased to exist as “village servants”, which rank they had held when the old village communes were living units. District after district we get the following story narrated by Hunter in his Statistical Account of Bengal and the different district Gazetteers and we quote below some of them. Hunter¹³², writing about Hooghly district noted that “all these persons (viz. The 8 notables) however, long ago ceased to exist as village officials. They held their rank when old village communes were living units, but these ancient institutions have now disappeared or fast disappearing. At the period when they existed each of the person named above was still a village official and had lands assigned for their maintenance from the common property of the village community. They now are simply private servants carrying on their occupations, which their names indicate, and receiving no usual remuneration from the individuals who employ them. It is only in cases of religious establishment, the expenses of which are defrayed from the endowments assigned for the support of their officiating staff that Chakran or service lands are allotted to the priest who performs the worship, to the barber and washerman who assist in the ceremonies, to the kumhar \ potter who supplies earthen pots and vessels used in the placing the offerings before the idols, to the kamar who performs the sacrifices and the Dom who attends with his drums, etc... In some zamindaris there are small patches of service lands assigned to barber washerman potter and smith for services rendered to the zamindar’s family”. Again, writing about the Buradwan district, Hunter¹³³ noted that “All these (the 8 notables listed) persons, however, ceased to exist long ago and are now merely artisans and servants carrying on their caste-occupations and remunerated by those who employ them. In the old Hindu village they had lands assigned for their maintenance by the community”. Writing more than three decades later, in 1910, the Buradwan district Gazetteer¹³⁴ repeated the same story in almost the same words: “all these persons however, in the Hindu village had lands assigned for their maintenance by the community ceased to exist as village officials long ago and are now merely artisans and servants

132. SAB., 1877, vol. III., reprinted 1923., pp. 320-321.

133. SAB., 1877, vol. IV., p.

134. 1910, p.

carrying on their caste-occupations and remunerated by those who employ them.” In respect of Bankura Hunter¹³⁵ noted that “in the old Hindu organization, these persons were looked upon as public servants, and remunerated by grants of rent-free land from the common lands of the village. They have, however, ceased for a long time to exist as village officials and are now hardly more than private servants carrying on certain occupations and paid for their work by the individuals on whom they attend.” In the same vein the Bankura District Gazetteer noted that the “other village officials” other than the Gumashta, Mukhiya or Mandal “are the priest, barber, washerman and representatives of various artisan castes. In the old Hindu organization these persons were looked upon as public servants and remunerated by grants of rent-free land from common lands of the village. They have however, long ceased to exist as village officials and are now hardly more than private servants carrying out certain occupations and paid for their work by individuals on whom they attend.”

Similar quotations may be multiplied; the burden however of the story is, after the disintegration of village community and the establishment of zamindari, the community artisans and servants lost the legal backing of the village community and became private servants carrying on their caste-occupation serving any one that employed them. Besides the degeneration of the village community and the establishment of zamindari, there were other factors also which affected the service system. With the entry of money and market via land revenue, at the end of the 18th and beginning of the 19th century, the village community artisans were becoming commodity producers. As Chicherov¹³⁶ observed, “the growing ties of artisans with the market outside the village community were eroding the latter’s self-sufficiency and the maintenance by the community of its own artisans, especially those producing consumer goods was increasingly being replaced by commodity relations between the product and the artisan.” On the whole, village services became privatized and commercialized over time.

Writing about the nature and significance of the above transformation in rural Bengal Ramakrishna Mukherjee¹³⁷ observed that “the previous economic structure lost its direct usefulness under the British rule, though the previous social strata

135. SAB., vol. IV., p. 244-245. And BDG., Bankura, p. 62.

136. India, Economic Development in the 16th –18th centuries, Outline History of Crafts and Trade, Moscow, 1971, p. 28.

137. The Dynamics of Rural Society, op.cit., p. 102.

did not wither away. On the contrary they remained in the society by dovetailing themselves in the newly evolved class structure". He further observed that "this was possible because there was no fundamental change in the character of the economy which under colonial conditions and due to the lack of industrialization on the one hand and the growth of the landlordism on the other remained semi-feudal in all essentials."

The above noted transformation in the pre-existing service relationships of community artisans and servants certainly had its impact on the nature of their remuneration. The table no. 6.4.4. (2) below clearly indicates the disarray brought in it in comparison with the community maintained service model which envisaged assignment of service land for maintenance and \ or payment of dues in kind as a share of the produce or a certain customarily fixed amount. Since the old established custom does not vanish overnight and outright, the gradual nature of the change between districts can also be found mirrored in the Table. In this context E. A. Gait¹³⁸ observed that the system of remuneration to artisans and servants in Bengal, like that in Bihar where it was a customarily recognized share of grain at harvest, "prevailed to a more limited extent" as the village organization with its equipment of artisans and servants has disintegrated. While " they received fixed remuneration in cash or grain, the present tendency is towards payment by job. The village carpenters and blacksmiths are usually paid in cash for the actual work done."

6.4.5. Fishing for "Jajmani" in Bengal?

While discussing the emergence of Jajmani relations in U.P. Mayer P.¹³⁹ has used the evidence of Bengal to help trace the development of it. He writes that "from 1860 onward we have increasing evidence beginning in Bengal, of the transformation of pre-existing village social relationships." He quotes W.W.Hunter¹⁴⁰ writing about Bankura in 1877 about the changes in the older position as village servants maintained by the village community as public servants to private servants, paid for their work by the individuals on whom they attended. We have already

138. Census of India, 1901, Vol I, part I, Report, PP. 197-199. Also see Imperial Gazetteer of India, Provincial Series, Bengal Vol. I, 1907, reprinted 1984, p 71.

139. Inventing village Tradition; The late 19th century origins of North Indian "Jajmani system", op.cit., p. 379.

140. SAB., vol. IV, p. 368.

Table No. 6.4.4 (2) Remuneration paid to Artisans and servants

Artisans/servants (1)		District (2)	Remuneration (3)
1.	Sutradhar	Burdwan	Holds Chakran lands and is paid by those who employ him and paid by the job according to service rendered.
		Bankura	Holds Chakran lands and receives a certain fixed measure of rice from every cultivator for keeping the woodwork of the plough in order and paid separately for other work.
2.	Kamar	Bankura	Holds Chakran lands for sacrificial work and receives a fixed quantity of rice from every husbandman for keeping the plough in order. For other work he is paid at contract rate.
		Birbhum	In addition to his private employment, hold Chakran lands from zamindar for smith's work and for sacrificing goats at religious festival.
		Burdwan	Holds Chakran lands and is remunerated by those who employ him
		24 Paraganas	Receives no settled rate of remuneration from the village as a whole, but is paid by persons employing him according to work done either in kind or cash.
		Hooghly	Holds Chakran lands. Remuneration details not given.
3.	Kumhar	Birbhum	Besides his production and private supply \ sale of domestic ware, he holds Chakran lands for supply of earthen vessels at village festivals and to Gumastha etc. officials as public duty.
		Bankura	While he holds Chakran land for supply of pottery for temples etc., his supply of earthen vessels for domestic use are paid for in cash by those who need them.
		Midnapore	Holds Kumhar Jagir lands. Other details not given.
		Hooghly	Holds Kumhar Jagir lands. Other details not given.
4.	Napit	Bankura	Holds Napit Jagir lands and gets fixed grain dues of rice from each family at harvest. Besides this general custom he is paid by the job in some villages.
		Burdwan	Holds Chakran lands and is remunerated for his services by those who employ him. He is paid by the job.

Artisans/servants (1)		District (2)	Remuneration (3)
		Birbhum	In addition to his private employment he holds Chakran lands for attendance at Poojas and does sundry duties at other times for the zamindar. He also gets remuneration for doing extra professional duties for other persons as "public remuneration."
		Midnapore	Holds Napit Jagir lands, gets annual grain dues from each family at harvest and receives gifts on ceremonial occasions.
		24 Paraganas	His office is hereditary and is paid in grain dues. Besides his regular remuneration he receives presents at birth, marriages and shradhas etc.
		Hooghly	Holds Chakran lands. Remuneration details not given.
5.	Dhoba	Burdwan	Holds Chakran lands since old Hindu regime. He is paid by the job according to service rendered in money or grain by those who employ him.
		Birbhum	In addition to his private employment, he holds Chakran lands to assist in certain ceremonies.
		Bankura	Holds Chakran lands and is paid in cash or kind by those who employ him.
		Midnapore	Annually paid in cash or in kind by those who employ him. He has no special or ritual duties.
		Hooghly	Holds service lands. Other details not given.
		24 Paraganas	His office is hereditary and is remunerated in grain by those who employ him.
6.	Mali \ Malakar	Bankura	Holds Chakran lands and paid either in cash or kind for supply of flowers on ceremonial occasions.
		Burdwan	Holds Chakran lands since the time of Hindu regime and is remunerated by those who need his services and is paid by the job according to the services rendered.
		Birbhum	In addition to his private employment he holds Mali Chakran lands for supplying garlands and flowers to deities in the village temples as public remuneration.
		Hooghly	Receives grain dues at harvest.

Artisans/servants (1)		District (2)	Remuneration (3)
7.	Purohit	Burdwan	Holds rent-free Chakran lands since old Hindu regime and is paid by Daxina fees for each ceremony he conducts and also by Nevedya offerings made to idols he worships in the customers households or in temples.
		Birbhum	Besides his private employment with his customers he holds as public remuneration Purohit Chakran lands for performing Pooja in the village temple, the charge of which falls on the zamindar. He also performs various religious ceremonies of the village and receives public remuneration.
		Bankura	Holds Chakran lands. As a family priest he is remunerated by gift of rice and milk daily for Pooja at client's house and as temple keeper all the Nevedya offerings before the deity. Besides he receives gifts and Daxina for all the ceremonies and rituals he conducts, particularly on the occasion of birth, marriage and shraddha
		Midnapore	Holds Chakran lands and is paid by Daxina at whose house he conducts worship and at ceremonies and rituals. The offerings to deities and dead ancestors are his.
		Hooghly 24 Paraganas	Holds Chakran lands as a Sebait at the temple Receives an allowance of grain and offerings made by villagers to the village deity.
8.	Ganaka \ Acharjya	Burdwan	Holds Chakran lands since the old Hindu regime and is remunerated by those who employ him. He recites the almanac, casts horoscopes and predicts the future. He is paid by Daxina for each service.
		Bankura	Holds Chakran Land and is remunerated in money as Daxina and by gifts of rice, pulses and vegetables.
		Midnapore	Holds "Ganakottar" service lands, is paid by rice and betel nut by those who avail of his services.

Source: Hunter's Statistical Account of Bengal and Bengal District Gazetteer volumes.

quoted the relevant extract by Hunter. This “privatization” of village services was due to the disintegration and decay of the old village communities and the transformation of the earlier land tenure from raiyatwari to zamindari. With the legal backing of the village community thus lost the “individualized” artisans and servants served only those who employed them. The private service relations became dyadic and were probably patterned through patron-clientage. However this need not necessarily be interpreted as Jajmani as defined by the anthropologists. Any dyadic service relation is not Jajmani. Similar transformation has taken place elsewhere in the country which had community maintained artisans and servants to serve the village community as a whole, but has not gone the Jajmani way.

Mayer, in the same vein, (on the same page) notes further that Hunter’s discussion of the changes in the service tenures of land in Birbhum “throws further light upon the process of change”. “In Birbhum as in Bankura village artisans and servants were already individual entrepreneurs by the late 1870s. They did however, retain small parcels of rent-free village land to compensate them for the provision of residual village services, primarily of a ritual kind.” Mayer, it may be noted, selectively quotes the list of 5 Chakran grants, while Hunter’s account of Birbhum has listed in all 9 Chakran grants, of which 3 are those of village administrative staff and 6 of village artisans and servants. Mayer’s select set included only those in whose case there was a reference to their ceremonial \ ritual service, namely the Kamar, Kumhar, Napit, Mali besides Purohit (temple priest). Since there was no such reference to Dhobi Chakran, Mayer has omitted to refer to Dhobi.

Mayer has termed these Chakran holdings as “vestigial” or remnants of the past. But it is necessary to note that these rent-free grants are not the ones given by the old village community for the maintenance of the service staff during the earlier raiyatwari tenure, but grants made by zamindars which in most cases were “in the nature of a general retainer of services of the grantee for the village and specific work for an individual is paid separately” as the Birbhum Account¹⁴¹ has noted. In respect of Chakran lands it further noted that these holdings “are those granted rent-free by the zamindars or proprietors as remuneration for particular persons for services to be rendered to them or to the village in their behalf... and in most cases the zamindar or proprietor has a right to resume them on the failure of the holders to discharge their duties. These tenures are hereditary but are not transferable by the holders”. While in Hunter’s Birbhum list of Chakran grants to

141. Op.cit., p. 118.

the village servants by the zamindar, the duties of the service grantee are to the zamindar and to the village as a whole, besides his private employment, the specific interpretation put by Mayer on these Chakran grants as “retained by them to compensate them for the provision of residual village services, primarily of a ritual kind” seems to be farfetched. It was not that the said land was retained by the servants, but the servants-who had privatized the original village services-were “retained” by the zamindars by land grants to serve them or their representatives in the village or the village, primarily by ritual or ceremonial services appropriate to their castes as their traditional calling was privatized.

While the association of ceremonial or ritual aspect may be a secondary and later growth for the Jajmani system as such, for our present context, the duties of those who held chakran grants given by zamindars on their behalf were primarily defined for the village as a whole and their services in this regard were not dyadic. In this context, it should be further noted that “the ceremonial \ ritual services rendered by a caste are unconnected with the traditional calling of the caste, and even if the members of the caste give up their traditional calling and take up some other occupation, they can continue to render ceremonial \ ritual services to the village community.”¹⁴² Miller¹⁴³ calls this as “Jati Dharma”. As Pocock¹⁴⁴ puts it, “the razor blade may take away the barber’s daily work, it does not destroy the barber caste.

One doubts whether Mayer seems to suggest the development of Jajmani relations in Bengal following the disintegration of the old village service system. Neither in Hunter’s Statistical Account of Bengal nor Bengal District Gazetteers do we find any mention, of Jajmani, nor do we find any mention of it in later village studies.¹⁴⁵ However, there is a mention of a term Jajmani in Fukutake’s

142. Mathur K.S., Caste and Ritual in Malwa village, Asia Publishing House, Bombay, 1964, pp. 141-142.

143. Miller D., Exchange and Alienation in the Jajmani System, Journal of Anthropological Research, University of New Mexico, vol. 42, no. 4., 1986, p. 543.

144. Notes on Jajmani Relationships, Contributions to Indian Sociology, vol.VI, 1962, p.85.

145. Refr. For e.g. Bhoumick P.K., Caste and Service in a Bengal village, Department of Anthropology, Calcutta University, 1963; Symalkanti Sengupta, The Social System of a Bengal Village, Editions India, Calcutta, 1973; Tadashi Fukutake et al, The Socio-Economic Structure of Indian Village, Surveys of Villages in Gujarat and West Bengal, Institute of Asian Economic Affairs, Tokyo, Japan, 1964. Other studies not listed.

study, with respect to blacksmith, which usage seems to be conventional. An exceptional use of the word Jajman is found used in Hunter's Bankura Account¹⁴⁶ and the same repeated when Bankura District Gazetteer¹⁴⁷ only in respect of barber's client \ customer. The Gazetteer which reproduces verbatim Hunter's account, notes that "the Napit or barber, besides shaving certain families called his Jajmans or customers has to be present in marriage ceremonies and assist in the performance of certain rites". Mayer¹⁴⁸ suggests that "the barber was the fogleman of Jajmani relations" again quoting Gait's Bengal evidence about Napit's exclusive right to work for people in a recognized circle, which we have noted earlier.

However, Mujumdar D.N.¹⁴⁹ in a review of Beidelman's book observes that "in Bengal as well as in the whole of eastern India, it is the Brahmins and the only the priests among them who have Jajmans, for they minister to the ritual and spiritual needs of the Jajmans and there is no such Jajman \ Kamin relation as one finds in parts of Northern India. The Brahmins have Jajmans and they serve twice-born castes including Brahmins, but priests are not Kamins or Purjans, nor do they serve lower castes. It is only the Nai or barbers who also own Jajmans and Nai claim to be Nai-Brahmins".

6.5.0. The Pawani \ Pauniya System of Bihar.

Sandwiched between U.P. where the so called system of Jajmani came about, as a transformation of the pre-existing village service system under zamindari and the Bengal where the old village service system disintegrated and the professional services got privatized and the individual entrepreneur was found working on piecework basis, the conservative and "feudal" Bihar, despite the growth of zamindari seems to have retained the old village service system but under the "manorial influence" of zamindars uninfluenced by the changes in the neighborhood.

146. SAB., vol. IV, p. 244.

147. 1910, p. 62.

148. Op.cit., p. 381.

149. Man, May 1960, pp. 115-117.

6.5.1. Brief background.

The division of Bihar into north and south, with the river Ganga as the boundary is merely based on the physical consideration. North Bihar is a great center of indigo cultivation and possesses many tracts of natural fertility, while south Bihar is comparatively secure from famine due to the Sone Canal system. Ethnically, there is no great difference between the north and the south so far as tracts near the Ganga are concerned, but further away the people of south Bihar show unmistakable signs of their connection with the Dravidian tribes of Chota Nagpur, while in the north Bihar there has evidently been an intermingling with the Himalayan tribes. Besides geography and ethnography there is a cultural basis as well, for the division. While the Chota Nagpur belt has been identified for a long time as the home of various tribes, the Ganga plain is not culturally and historically homogeneous. It is divided into a number of cultural zones, of which the chiefs are Maithili speaking zone of northeast Bihar, the Bhojpuri speaking zone of western Bihar and the Maghai speaking zone of central Bihar. While the identification of the above cultural areas is not merely on language basis, historical forces have nurtured the identities since ancient times.

According to Grierson¹⁵⁰ Bihar was for centuries, much more closely connected with the United Provinces of Agra and Oudh (Uttar Pradesh), than with Bengal to which it was tagged on as a sub province during the colonial regime. He observes, "the face of the Bihari is ever turned to the north west, as from Bengal he has experienced many hostile invasions".

6.5.2. Villages and Village Communities.

In Bihar as compared to Bengal, the people are found to be gregarious and live in closely packed villages. Instead of dispersed homesteads, one finds clusters of mud walls grouped together round a main street with side lanes. While most villages are situated in the open surrounded by cultivation, in north Bihar many villages are built on the edges of swampy depressions.

As regards the size of village communities in Bihar, Censuses have found that more than half the number of villages have a community size between 200-1000 persons, and a little less than one-third have community size less than 200 persons. In other words small and very small villages dominate and they cover up a little

150. Linguistic Survey of India, vol. I, part I, 1927, reprinted 1967, pp. 148-149.

less than half of the total village population in Bihar. While the average community size of the village \ Mouza gets reduced by the small villages of Chota Nagpur Plateau, which contains less than half as many people as the villages of the north and the south Bihar, in the latter area the most populous village communities are found in Darbhanga, averaging a little less than 1000 persons per village. In the state of Bihar as a whole nearly 90 percent of the population was found living with less than 2000 inhabitants. While the whole of Chota Nagpur and South Bihar is essentially a land of small villages, North Bihar excelled in medium and large sized village communities, but with few towns, indicating a marked preponderance of the rural over the urban population in the state.

6.5.3. Villages under Zamindari.

As Baden Powell¹⁵¹ has noted, it was really the raiyatwari form of village with peasant proprietorship that was dominant prior to the advent of Mughal rule in Bihar, as also Bengal and Orissa. Thereafter with the decay of the Mughal power, the practice of revenue farming grew up and resulted in the creation of an aristocratic class superior to the village communities, who gradually acquired the name and position of the zamindars and posed as proprietors of land. Hunter¹⁵² noted that these “petty landlords or Maliks, unlike the zamindars of Bengal, were never mere government officials. They managed their own estate and after deducting one-tenth of the net produce for their own support made over the remainder to the imperial collector or Amil. Besides they were in the habit of receiving from the villagers certain presents as acknowledgement of their feudal superiority... and at the time of British Permanent Settlement, the Maliks were placed exactly on the footing of zamindars” and became hereditary officers with a right to engage for revenue with the government. The zamindar thus came to be looked upon as a sort of landlord in his relation to the raiyats and a sort of tenant in his relation to the state. The villages under his charge assumed the form of landlord or zamindari villages as the transformation of the raiyatwari village is easily amenable for such change.

However in spite of this transformation, as Baden Powell¹⁵³ noted, “in Bihar the old institutions survived more perfectly, because, there the villages seem to

151. Indian Village Communities, op.cit., p. 77ff.

152. Statistical Account of Bengal, 1877, vol. XI, Patna and Saran, p. 95.

153. Land Systems of British India, vol. I, and pp. 676-77.

have been held by minor chiefs or even petty officers of raja's army; at any rate the circumstances were such that the landlords were small holders, the greater chiefs did not often develop in to zamindars and therefore, even though the village gained a proprietor or even several joint proprietors the form of the constitution survived." He further noted that "the system only admitted one man bearing the title, unless several expressly agreed that they were co-sharers. Some of these families though they had dropped out of rank and were not zamindars in possession, were still so far recognized as to receive the Malikana allowance". Noting again, that Bihar, although more feudal than the rest of the two provinces, had not suffered due to the transformation into zamindari regarding the basic production organization and labor organization, he reiterates that "the old institutions survived more perfectly as the small village chiefs did not develop in to big zamindars as in North-West province and Oudh". "What in NWP would have produced village landlord communities, developed there into small zamindari estates."

The transformation of a severalty village of peasant proprietors to that of landlord village, brought among others, two major changes in the village. Firstly all cultivators were reduced to the position of the tenants of different orders.

Secondly, the village administrative set up was changed to suit the needs of the zamindar. In the earlier set up the village was managed by the headman called Jeth raiyat when Brahman or Rajput and Mahato when of Koeri or Kurmi caste. While this was so south of Ganga, in the north he was titled as Mukadam. With the establishment of zamindari he became zamindar's underling and assisted the Gumasta and Patwari in the collection of rents. In the zamindars' establishment the chief functionary was Gumasta, who was landlord's agent with duty to collect rents and generally to look after the interest of the Malik. He was assisted by the Patwari and Barahil. The latter was the messenger and collected the tenants to the managing office of the estate whenever they were wanted. The Patwari was the chief village official but where villages belonged to several sets of proprietors, there were generally as many Patwaris as there were estates or Pattis in the village. When a village was partitioned, each shareholder maintained his own Patwari. On the other hand, if the villages were small, one Patwari had often the charge of two or more villages. Petty landlords sometimes acted as their own Patwaris, assisted by the cultivators in maintaining the rent accounts. Formerly a government servant, the Patwari became the zamindar's servant. The Gorait, variously styled as Chaukidar, Kotwal and watchman was attached to the Patwari to assist him. He belonged to the old village establishment. There was another Gorait, appointed by

the landlord to act as his messenger. Sometimes the same functionary performed the duties of both watch and ward of the village and also as landlord's messenger.

As most of the land in the estate was held by tenants on Bhaoli or kind rent basis, the zamindar's establishment also contained an Amin or crop surveyor, a Dandidar or weighman who was usually of Sonar or Teli caste, a Jeri Baksha or chainman who assisted the Amin, and a Sali or arbitrator between the zamindar and raiyat regarding the produce of each field and fixed a produce per bigha, so as to assign shares after the Amin has surveyed. These people were normally maintained by the big zamindars as permanent servants.

Before the cultivator took his share of the produce after meeting the dues, of harvesting labor, the customary dues of village artisans and servants in return for their professional services and weighman's commission, he had other numerous demands on the produce. These varied in number and amount with the temper of cultivator's power and endurance but the following were generally demanded and paid without much reluctance. There were abwabs or customary cesses¹⁵⁴ to be paid at harvest time to the landlord and his servants, such as compensation for drayage and wastage (Dahiak and \ or Manseri), rice on account of daily food (Sidha) to landlord's agents at the time of sowing and harvesting, Naucha pluckings at the time of surveying to Barhil and Kandi, fees to landlord's agents to cover the expenses of landlord's visitors, fees to Patwari upon signing the quittance of rent (Hujtana), commission paid to weighmen of the produce (Dandidari \ Sonari), and a tribute (Salami) often demanded by the landlord.

In addition to these deductions in the produce the other exactions of the landlord, in exercise of his arbitrary powers, which afflicted with demands calculated to interfere materially with tenants and others in their pursuits must be noted. For example, Hunter¹⁵⁵ has listed the following:

1. The landlord took the tenant's bullocks and ploughs to his own lands for work without remuneration.
2. He compelled his tenants to sow his fields without payment.
3. His field labor performed by low castes was never fully remunerated being paid in food only.

154. A detailed list of these is given in SAB. Vol. XII. Gaya and Shahabad Districts, 1877, pp. 69-73.

155. *ibid.*, p. 219.

4. He extracted a pitcherful of sugar-cane juice from each sugar mill, probably along with some jaggary.

From artisans, servants and others:

5. He extracted oil (Chiraghi) from each Teli or oilman without payment.
6. He took baskets from each Dom and shoes from each Chamar without payment.
7. The Napit shaved and shampooed him without remuneration whenever sent for.
8. If the landlord resided on his estate, the village Kumhar supplied him pottery at Holi and Dasara festivals. If he was non-resident, his village amla was daily supplied instead. Further the Kumhar was required to supply pots and pans free of cost to members of zamindar's establishment when they visit the village on duty.
9. He could requisition the services of other artisans and servants whenever needed.

From the above it is seen that due to the development of the zamindari the village artisans and servants or "village officials" as they were termed also came to be called as "manorial servants"¹⁵⁶ though they were described as "officials who are independent of the Malik" by Patna District Gazetteer (1907) ¹⁵⁷ and listed as follows: 1. Jethraiyat 2. Brahman priest 3. Sonar, Dandidar 4. Barber 5. Carpenter 6. Blacksmith 7. Washerman 8. Tanner.

6.5.4 (A) Village Artisans and Servants.

In the following Table No. 6.5.4.(1) we have listed all artisans and servants found functioning as reported by Hunter in his Statistical Account of Bengal as well as different District Gazetteers. Of these only the first five were officially recognized as village artisans and servants (Panchapounia, cf. Panchakarua) in the village service system. Even so the existence of Panchapaunia for instance in the tribal Chota Nagpur District of Lohardaga, Hunter¹⁵⁸ reported that barbers, washermen and potters were introduced in 1839, but were only found near much

156. Hunter, SAB., vol. XII, Shahabad, 1877, p. 219.

157. Bengal District Gazetteer, Patna, 1907, p.45.

158. SAB., vol. XVI, 1877, pp. 324-335.

Table Number: 6.5.4 : Artisans and servants of Bihar

No.	Artisans \ servants	North Bihar	South Bihar	Chota Nagpur
1.	Carpenter	Barahi	Barahi	Barahi
2.	Blacksmith	Lohar ^A	Lohar	Lohar
3.	Barber	Napit	Napit \ Hajam	Nau
4.	Washerman	Dhobi	Dhobi	Dhoba
5.	Potter	Kumhar	Kumhar	Kumhar
6.	Cobbler \ Tanner	Chamar	Chamar	Chamar \ Muchi \ Dom
7.	Brahmin priest	Brahmin priest	Gram purohit	-
8.	Tribal priest	-	Baiga	Baiga \ Pujari \ Pahn \ Naek
9.	Cattle grazer	-	Goala	Ahir \ Goala
10.	Crop watcher	Badhwara	Badhwara	-
11.	Fire wood provider	Kandi ^B	-	-
12.	Basket maker	-	-	Dom ^E
13.	Drum beater	-	Pauniya, Drum beater ^C	-
14.	Gardener \ Florist	-	Mali ^D	-
15.	Oil presser	-	-	Teli ^F
16.	Weaver	-	-	Weaver ^F
17.	Betel leaf vendor	-	Tamoli ^D	-

A. In Purnea District Lohar's work was done by carpenter

B. Reported from Monghir District (SAB, vol. XIV.)

C. Reported from Bhagalpur District (SAB, XV)

D. Reported from Gaya District (B.D.G. 1919)

E. Reported from Ranchi District (B.D.G. 1917)

F. Reported from Singbhum District (B.D.G. 1910)

Source: Statistical Account of Bengal (SAB.) and Bengal District Gazetteers (B.D.G.)

frequented halting places and villages where larger Hindu tenure holders lived. Sometimes the cobbler \ tanner was considered instead of the potter amongst the Panchapaunia. However, restriction to five seems to be conventional and others like cobbler \ potter, Brahman priest, Tribal priest etc. were also retained as the services were need based. While the Chamar got one bundle of grain from every field and exchanged his supply of shoes and neck rope (Nada) for grain in south Bihar, he was regularly paid a fixed quantity of grain at harvest in the Chota Nagpur region. But in the north Bihar region, he was reported only in the Purnea District and no grain allowances were paid to him. The cobbler \ tanner however, had the right, in all regions of Bihar, to collect the skins of all fallen cattle in the village.

As regards the Brahmin priest, in the north Bihar though he is reported from the Brahmin dominated Tirhut, no remuneration details are recorded. But in respect of south Bihar where he was styled as Gram Purohit, he received a percentage of the produce holding his office hereditarily. The tribal priest was reported mostly in the Chota Nagpur region. The priest variously known as Baiga Pujari, Pahn, Naek, held rent-free land and received a small quantity of grain from each raiyat. But the fowls and goats sacrificed as offerings were his perquisites. The Baiga was also reported in the Shahabad District of south Bihar and held rent-free land.

In respect of others noted in the table, while cattle grazers and crop watchers were agricultural laborers rather than non-agricultural professionals, the firewood provider Kandi and the drumbeater Chamar announcer were zamindar's servants. The basket maker Dom sold his ware and was paid for each article in kind on demand. While the oil presser Teli and the weaver (Dom?) were individual entrepreneurs resident in the village selling their products, the florist Mali and the betel leaf vendor Tamoli reported from Gaya District, were retained to meet the ritual needs of their goods and were given one bojha (bundle) of grain per cultivator at harvest.

6.5.4 (B) Remuneration to Artisans and Servants.

Generally all artisans and servants, particularly, the Panchpauni were paid in grain annually at each harvest at customarily defined fixed rates, which varied according to the state of the season. The payments were effected on the threshing floor, from the grain heap, before its division between the zamindar and the

cultivator. As Grierson¹⁵⁹ noted in his book on Gaya district that “a custom is... for each artisan to take a recognized share of grain where crop has been reaped and brought to the threshing floor”. While the division of the crop on the threshing floor (Batai Kharihani) was “Agor Batai”, as it was watched and guarded till its division, another system was division in the field, one form of which was “Bojah Batai” or division by actual number of bundles of the crop reaped. From the joint or common heap after deducting the wages of the reapers, the village artisans and officials, who have worked all round the year for both the tenant and landlord, received their remuneration.

This linking of the remuneration to the grain heap, which is an important feature of the village service system of community maintained artisans and servants, was, as Gaya District Gazetteer¹⁶⁰ noted, “particularly suited to an agricultural country... as it has the advantage of being unaffected by any rise in prices of food grains. Whatever the fluctuations in the prices of these in the market, the laborer’s wage remains the same”. Similar remark is made for Muzaffarpur District. As Hunter¹⁶¹ noted “a remarkable result of this system is that the village artisan is a sharer with the cultivator in the fortunes of the season and in times of scarcity, when the villagers cannot pay their dues, these are the first persons, excluding the absolutely destitute upon whom distress would fall.”

The shares from the grain heap were fixed differently for different professional service classes. Grierson¹⁶² in his book on Gaya District listed the carpenter and blacksmith as being paid a fixed quantity of rice (paddy) on per plough basis and chamar getting a fixed quantity and Dom was paid for what he did and did not receive any regular payment. So also the Teli, who was not a Paunia. He further noted that “in addition to these regular payments from the villagers, the artisan or village servant often has a small plot of rent-free land in return for which he supplies the zamindar with earthenware or shaves and cuts his hair etc. as the case may be”.

Elsewhere in Bihar, generally the carpenter and blacksmith received a fixed quantity of grain either on per plough basis or on per bigha basis as so many Dhurs per bigha, a Dhur being 1/20th of bigha. The smith, reportedly, held service

159. Quoted in the census report 1901, vol. I, part I, pp. 197-99.

160. Bengal District Gazetteer, 1909, Gaya, pp. 168-77.

161. SAB., vol. XII, Gaya and Shahabad, 1877, pp. 69-70.

162. Quoted in Census of India, 1901, vol. I, part I, op.cit.

land in the Chota Nagpur region. In respect of the barber, his share in the heap was a fixed quantity of grain per annum per head or per adult using razor in the household of the client and he received perquisites on ceremonial and ritual occasions for his services. The barber's office was hereditary, and he held rent-free service land in the Chota Nagpur region. Similarly the washerman's share was also a fixed quantity of grain per annum in accordance with the customer's household size in terms of adult members or female members. Sometimes the washerman washed the clothes on cash basis charging per article washed, as noted in the Palamau District Gazetteer (1907) and also by Hunter.¹⁶³ He also received perquisites on ceremonial and ritual occasions. Like the barber, washerman's office was also hereditary and he held service land in the Chota Nagpur region.

As regards the potter's remuneration, the Gazetteers have reported differently. The Hunter's¹⁶⁴ Statistical Account reported that potter gets one Chhatak of grain per maund of produce from each cultivator for providing tiles. In Monghyr District, Hunter¹⁶⁵ noted that the potter along with Kandi was paid by curious system known as "Naucha" (plucking). As the Amin measured the field to make an estimate of the produce, the Kumhar and Kandi were to follow him and pluck with their hands as much ears of corn as they can until the measurement is completed. The grain so collected by the potter constituted his remuneration for supplying pots and pans to the zamindar's managing establishment, whenever they visit the village on duty during the year. For Palamau, the Gazetteer (1907) ¹⁶⁶ noted that the potter was paid in kind from Aghan (November-December) to Chait (March-April) and in cash during the remainder of the year. The potter held rent-free land in the Chota Nagpur region, as also in the Shahabad District of south Bihar. However, the picture of potter's services to the village community of supplying earthenware, both secular and ritual, remains vague and unclear.

In respect of chamar, the Gaya District Gazetteer¹⁶⁷ reported that he was paid one Bojah (bundle) of grain per Har (plough) and Hunter noted that he charged, for the supply of leather for yoke and whip thong, two and half lb.'s of grain from

163. SAB., vol. XII, 1877, Tirhut, p. 75.

164. SAB., vol. XII, 1877, pp. 69-70.

165. SAB., vol. XV, 1877, pp. 78-80; also Grierson, Bihar Peasant Life (1855), 1926, S.V. 1198, p. 318 for Maucha.

166. Bengal Dist. Gaz., 1907, Palamau, p. 104ff.

167. Bengal Dist. Gaz., 1919, Gaya, pp. 168-177 and SAB., vol. XII, p. 69.

each cultivator. Similarly, Hunter¹⁶⁸ reported for Shahabad District, that the Chamar received one bundle of grain from every field and was paid separately four seers of grain for every pair of shoes and one share for every Nada or neck rope. In Palamau¹⁶⁹ he was paid a fixed quantity of grain at winter harvest, while the Chamar in Purnea District¹⁷⁰ was not paid any grain allowances at all, but had a right to collect the skins of all dead cattle in the village, a right uniformly observed in all the villages of Bihar.

Like that in the Northern zamindari villages, the system of supplementing the remuneration by rent-free service holding was not a common practice in Bihar, instead the general method was to allow the artisans and servants certain definite shares when grain was divided at harvests as described above, besides the certain perquisites which they received periodically. Hence rent-free service holding by village servants is rarely reported by the gazetteers in north and south Bihar. However, we find it reported so in the Chota Nagpur region.

6.5.5. The Pawni \ Pauniya Village service System.

We have named village service system in Bihar as Pawni \ Paunia system, in particular as Panchpawni \ Paunia system, following Grierson¹⁷¹ who noted that in Bihar “resident artisans and other non-cultivating residents” were “known as Pawni, Pauni, or Pauniya” and East Tirhut they were known as “Pawni Pasadi” and in Gaya as “Pabbi”. That this term was also used in the tribal region of Chota

Nagpur is attested by O’ Malley¹⁷² who wrote that in the Palamau District, “the system of payment in kind obtains in the case of Panchpaoni i.e. the five village officials common to almost all villages viz. the blacksmith, carpenter, barber, washerman and the potter”. The system was a variant of the community maintained village service system, which came under the “manorial influence” of the zamindars, where by the village artisans and servants had to put up extra work for the zamindar or Malik and his rent collecting staff. But there was no change in the village constitution on account of zamindari, which we have noted earlier.

168. SAB., vol. XII, p. 219.

169. SAB., vol. XVI, p. 329.

170. Bengal Dist. Gaz., 1911, p. 116.

171. Bihar Peasant Life, Government Printing press, Patna, 1926, S.V. 1193, p. 317.

172. Bengal Dist. Gaz., Palamou, 1907, p. 104ff.

In his Report on 1901 Census of India E.A. Gait¹⁷³, with reference to the Bihar system quoted the following from the Bengal report (1901): “more than 93 percent of the population is dependant on the (non-agricultural) occupations. Most of them are hereditary. The duties and remuneration of each group (of village servants) are fixed by custom and caste rules strictly prohibit a man from entering into competition with another of the same caste. In many districts, the barber, the washerman, the blacksmith etc., has his own defined circle (Brit or Shashan) within which he works and no one else may attempt to flinch his customers or jajmans from him on pain of severe punishment at the hands of a caste committee. The exclusive right to employment by the people in the circle constituting a man’s Brit is often so well established that it is regarded as a heritable property and with Mohommedams is often granted as dower”. It is interesting to note that in his survey research of the 1990 vintage, Hetukar Jha¹⁷⁴ found that this right had continued to be considered as the family heritage by each Pawni and his customer jajman.

A decade later, in his 1911 Census report, O’ Malley¹⁷⁵ underscoring the above, elaborated that “among the functional castes encroachment on the privileges of others- misappropriation of Birt as it is styled- is severely dealt with. A Barhi or carpenter must not make ploughs for a villager for whom another Barhi works. A Hajam or barber must stick to his own clients... A Chamar must not take the carcasses of cattle that another Chamar has a recognized right to, and the Chamarin who works as midwife must attend only to women of the families that her family customarily attends. Doms, Chamars and Halalkhors in some parts even sell, mortgage or give in dowry their hereditary rights”.

That the above noted customary arrangement continued to be honored and observed even during the last decade of the 20th century is revealed by the survey results of Hetukar Jha.¹⁷⁶ He writes, “the families in the village are not served haphazardly by the pawnis. These families are in fact distributed among the pawnis. The former are termed jajmans (not necessarily by the villagers). This distribution of jajmans among the pawnis is also traditionally laid down. If one pawni is found

173. Vol. I, part I, pp. 197-199 and Bengal Report, vol. VI, p. 473.

174. Social Structures of Indian Villages, a Study of Rural Bihar, Sage Publications, New Delhi, 1991, p.169.

175. Vol. V, Bengal, Bihar, Orissa and Sikkim, part I. Report, p. 489.

176. Social Structures of Indian Villages, op.cit, p. 169.

serving ten families it means that his family has been serving those ten families for many generations. The jajmans, in this case, are virtually at the disposal of his family. Other jajman families are similarly distributed”.

In the dynamics of the situation the above distribution or work allocation for pawnis subsisted and continued over generations, as the Malik, the raiyats and the pawnis continued to exist hereditarily on the village grain heap with their shares, defined. The raiyat was in the large number of cases “Mourusi” or hereditary with occupancy rights and as the Provincial Banking Enquiry Committee of 1930¹⁷⁷ noted, about 90 % held hereditary occupancy right which protected them from ejection and from frequent or unconscionable enhancement of rent. It may be noted they that were all peasant proprietors before the development of zamindari. In the Chota Nagpur region where the actual cultivators were largely drawn from the aboriginal stock, they were also protected in their occupancy rights and were prevented from selling their holdings or from alienating by mortgage. This stability or permanency in the cultivating tenure helped maintain permanent relations by the pawnis with raiyat and the Malik or Thakur or Sarkar as he was called. This explains the continuity of the service arrangement of the pawni and customer-jajmans over generations.

To continue with O’Malley’s discussion in the 1911 census, among the functional castes, he noted, “the panchayat or the caste council has such a power that it may order a general strike and outcaste anyone who ventures to work in defiance. The adoption of another occupation also involves punishment but only when it is considered a degrading employment such as making and selling of shoes. Apart from such instances there is little or none of the corporate life of a trade guild and no attempt to fix wages or regulate hours of work- much less any combination of castes that have the same trade or handicraft. The functional castes now deal mainly with breaches of caste customs regarding morality, marriage and commensality, but to a certain extent also with disputes and quarrels among their members.”

With the weakening of the hold of the caste council, breaches in the observance of the distribution of pawanis and clients, as noted by Jha ¹⁷⁸, seem to have crept in, more in respect of large and feeder villages than in the case of small and

177. P. 6.

178. Op.cit., pp. 170-172.

satellite ones. A pawani may serve another's client and the client may avail of the services of someone else's pawani. While these may be exceptional ones, as a general rule the sanctity of the traditional distribution has continued to be honored. This exhibits itself more effectively on the occasions of the religious ceremonies and rituals. Even the most dominant clients in the villages have to depend upon only those pawanis and purohits who have been serving them for generations for the performance of religious rituals and ceremonies. Jha has found this to be typical of the service relationship both in his satellite and feeder villages, which has been considered to be "an integral part of the sacred order". The religious ceremonies, even in the families of the most dominant men can not be held unless the pawnis and the purohits in their service for generations participate, to the extent that local tradition requires them to do so. Without their participation the legitimacy of the ceremony is questioned. In this matter even the feeder villages cannot violate the norms of distribution in this context by availing the services of pawnis and purohits of their choice. Any violation of traditional partnership in the service relationship undermines the sanctity of holding religious ceremonies in the village and the loss of legitimacy of the ceremony performed and the loss of prestige of the client concerned. No client would like to take such a risk. Thus "the service relationship seems to have been accorded some sort of religious sanctity which reinforces its ritual aspect."

Reverting back to the 1901 Census E.A. Gait¹⁷⁹ came across some "vague" terms with respect to occupation frequently returned in the Census schedules of Bihar, which he classified against caste and identified the occupation. One such term was "Jajmankar" reported as occupation of Brahmins, Hajams, Dhobis, Mehtars, Chamars and Doms. According to Gait, the term indicated that the person concerned carried on his traditional occupation and had the right to be employed by certain persons and to receive the customary fees. In essence the term "Jajmankar" was equivalent to Grierson's Pawni who latter called his occupational service with reference to his employer, whom he honorifically addressed as his Jajman. The second term is Brit \ Birit¹⁸⁰ which according to Gait, "is very much similar to Jajmankar, with this difference that it connotes a small grant of land held free from the landlord as a consideration for services rendered". While it is true that many pawnis may hold such Birt or Jagir land as it was called, not all

179. Census of India 1901, vol. VI, op.cit., p. 462.

180. Grierson. op.cit., S.V. 1209, p. 324.

were Birtidar pawnis. For all pawnis their Birt, irrespective of land grant, constituted their defined circle (Birt or Shashan) within which they worked and had the exclusive right of employment by the villagers in the circle, as noted earlier. The third term is “Basti Kamana or Mahalladari” which according to Gait “has somewhat similar meaning but is applied to Doms who remove the dead bodies and their females who act as mid wives”. Kamana, according to Grierson¹⁸¹ is “flaying and cleaning” of dead cattle. Basti Kamana is therefore the occupation of removing the dead cattle from the village residential area, (“Basti”) for flaying and cleaning towards the recovery of hide, and this is traditionally the monopoly right of Chamars and Doms everywhere.

While we have neither found any evidence of the “Jajmani system” as defined by the anthropologists, nor any historical development of the type described as Jajmani relation in the late 19th century in Uttar Pradesh, the modern writer, Hetukar Jha¹⁸² dubs the village service system in Bihar under the popular and catchy term “Jajmani”. Instead of labeling the system from server’s, i.e. pawni end, a method commonly followed everywhere, he labels, following modern anthropologists, from the service-receiving end, who were Jajmans i.e. customers or clients and discusses “Jajmani relations”.

Jha’s study is based on a sample survey of villages selected on the basis of the “historical” data contained in the village notes made at the time of cadastral survey. While Jha’s survey is an opinion survey to study social relations in the “primary level structure” embedded in such institutions as Bataidari, Janoury, Jajmani and Mahajani, the book fails to mention the survey year and is published in 1991.

In his analysis and discussion of the so-called Jajmani relationships, Jha refers to Grierson’s terminology and states that “terms such as Pawni, Pauni, (or Pauniya and Pawani Pasari) were used to designate clients and the Jajmani system was known as Pal, Hari and so on”.¹⁸³ While the use of Grierson’s terms to Judicial designate clients is alright, but calling the system as “Pal Hari and so on” and equating it to Jajmani system, is not at all correct, to say the least. According to Grierson¹⁸⁴ the term “Pal” means payment of remuneration to Pawnis, in particular

181. Op.cit., S.V. 1141, p. 300.

182. Social Structures of Indian Villages, op.cit., pp. 167-176.

183. Jha, op.cit., pp. 167-68.

184. Bihar Peasant Life, op.cit., S.V. 1194, p. 317 and S.V. 1196, p. 318.

to the carpenters, blacksmiths and Chamars. The term “Pal Paseri”¹⁸⁵ stands for such payment in west Tirhut, where Paseri means five seers but varies greatly. The term “Hari”¹⁸⁶ is used to stand for “the help given by the tenant in ploughing the landlords lands” in north and west Bihar generally. “To the east it is Harihar, Harihara, and Harihari.” It is “Harai” in Shahabad and west Tirhut, and “Harhi” in Patna and Gaya. Since these terms for payment of remuneration can not in themselves, stand as a label for the service system, it is necessary to underscore the above mistake and note that the mistake of equating it to Jajmani doubly confounds Jha’s discussion, as one mistake does not correct the other.

6.6.0. The “Saanta-Sevak” System of Village Service in Orissa.

The village service system in Orissa was a variant of the community maintained service system and had a lot of similarity with the “Asami” system of central India in so far as its services to the peasants who were regular customers was concerned. The pan Indian system was adopted and adapted to suit the regional conditions of contrasting natural environment and physical resources and containing a mix of tribal and non-tribal ethnic groups. As regards the social and political background, a substantial part of the territory was under princely states with differing administrative arrangements. Besides the superimposition of zamindari tenure, there were a variety of intermediary land tenures under which the villages were administered. All these factors affected the service system that was in existence, as detailed below.

6.6.1. Regional Background.

The state of Orissa as constituted today stands vertically spilt up into two natural regions, the coastal and the inland. While the development of the core the Oriya culture is believed to have taken place in the coastal plains, which is ascribed to political history and a variety of cultural factors, the whole of western Orissa was quite inaccessible in the past for its physical and ecological conditions. The eastern ghat hill range with thick forests runs through the entire western Orissa in the north south direction. As this tract was inaccessible and sparsely populated

185. Ibid., S.V. 1204, p. 321 and S.V. 1500, p. 433.

186. Ibid., S.V. 1201, p. 320.

with more tribal people, the ancient Hindu kings did not rule this area. This tract was divided into several native states, both big and small. A chief directly ruled each state. Although the chiefs of the states were almost independent in their respective territories, they owed allegiance to the kings of Orissa. This system continued more or less during the Mughal and Maratha periods and when the British conquered Orissa, these feudatory states were treated as princely states constituting the Eastern States Agency, comprising as many as twenty six states. The coastal region of Orissa comprised the districts of Balasore, eastern parts of Keonjhar, Dhenkanal, Cuttack, Puri and Ganjam districts.

6.6.2. The Villages and Village Communities.

Besides the physical and ecological conditions, availability of space, social habits of the people, the most important factor responsible in the determination of the size and character of village communities in Orissa was the prevalence a large component of tribals in the population. As per Censuses, while between districts the tribal component ranged from a mere three percent to as large as fifty percent, it was less than five percent in the coastal districts and ranged from twelve percent to fifty seven percent in the inland districts.

Predisposed to village formation due to strong tribal ties or strong sense of family life, the people are predominantly village dwellers continuing to live in rural areas spread over the large number of villages. But the nature of the village as a residential cluster of houses, as a unit remained indeterminate, small in size and in most cases the social and economic structure not fully developed. A large village, on the other hand was an aggregate of small residential units, each of which was good enough, according to popular notion, to be a village by itself. The predominance of small villages in the rural area is ascribed to the Orissan instinct to preserve their racial or caste homogeneity. This does not mean that there were no large villages, but they were negligible. While the medium sized villages, though in some districts constituted half to two third of the total number of villages, they together with the large ones constituted, not as large as the small ones in the totality of the villages in Orissa.

Between the natural divisions, the inland division was more rural in character than the coastal. While the coastal division had a smaller number of villages with a greater concentration in villages of size 500-2000, the inland division had a larger number of villages with greater concentration of population in villages with

less than 500. Whatever the population size, generally an average Oriya village¹⁸⁷ consisted of a main hamlet in which the higher castes stayed together surrounded by small hamlets belonging to different caste-communities. Such detached hamlets were occupied by such castes as Pans and Gandas. Ordinarily the village had one or more hamlets and each such village was a group of houses, each with a small compound enclosed by a fence and screened by a belt of trees.

While agriculture was the predominant occupation and major means of livelihood of the village community, the non-agricultural classes constituted a slender community in terms of numerical strength, but of no less an importance to the agricultural classes. Further, there were also fishing, and sheep and cattle rearing classes.

6.6.3. Land Tenure System and Village Administration.

While it is not necessary to go in to the details, a brief review of the land tenure system and village administration in the coastal and inland regions is necessary to understand the village service system embedded in the structure of the orissan village and found operating.

As noted by Hunter¹⁸⁸ during the time of native Hindu kings till the conquest of orissa by the Mughals in 1578 AD, "Property in the soil by a class of persons answering to the Zamindars of the present day was unknown. No intermediate tenure or proprietary rights of any kind were allowed to grow between the king and the cultivators of the soil. The orissan king had handed over half of his territory for the support of his chiefs, armies, officers of the state and others, and the other half was reserved for this royal domain. The military land was under the possession of military chiefs and the vast army of peasant-cum-soldiers tilled the soil in the peace- time and took up arms in the time of war. These men were called paiks and were supported by grants of lands, which they held. These villages were known as paiki villages. In course of time, the hereditary revenue officers in the agrarian system, who were never regarded as proprietors of land in any sense of the term, developed into a class of land owners in the peasant villages, with intermediary rights and emerged as landed aristocracy, towards the later period of Hindu rule.

187. Census of India 1901, vol. V, p. 44.

188. SAB., vol. XIX, Puri and Orissa Tributary States, (1877), 1976, p. 101.

With the onset of the Mughal land Settlement which retained the division of the territory in to Military fief and Civil (crown) land, the vast plain land of the coastal region settled for revenues under “Mughalbandi” was kept under the direct management of Mughal kings in Delhi. This necessitated the continuance of the pre-existing land revenue administration through Hindu officials. While changes in the land tenure and land revenue system were significant, the seed of “feudalism” was sown in the Orissan land, though the feudalistic structure was not directly developed in a full-fledged form till the British land settlement in Orissa. Since the Mughal rulers of Delhi could not exercise effectively their authority and control over the officials, the latter started functioning independently in their areas, and in course of time, as the decay of the Mughal power started, they took possession of their respective estates and thrust themselves in to the position of land owning zamindari class.

While the Mughal rule brought a turning point in the land tenure system, the same was extended and continued during the Maratha rule. Later, after the conquest of Orissa, the British vested the property right in land on such of those who were found in the Maratha accounts as zamindars, Mukadams, Padhans, Sarbarakars etc. These were recognized as proprietors and were allowed to enter in to engagement directly with the government for payment of land revenue of their respective estates. The zamindars were confirmed by the British to inherit and transfer by sale, gift or otherwise and were accorded right to collect rent from the raiyats, and also manorial rights over waste lands, forest lands of the estate and fisheries. They also had the right to grant lease and create subordinate tenures.

Among the sub-proprietary tenure holders were Padhans, the erstwhile village headmen appointed by the village communities. They were transformed into Mukadams by the Mughal administration and had acquired quasi-proprietary status. As remnants of the old class they were recognized as holders of sub-proprietary tenure with more or less the same rights as that of Mukadams. The Mukadami tenure holders became zamindars of their estates making revenue engagements with the government and enjoying the same rights and the privileges as zamindars. The Sarbarakars were mere revenue collecting agents, either servants or mere farmers who enjoyed Jagir lands. The Sarbarakar tenure was recognised as one of the sub-proprietary tenures.

Lakhiraj (Inam) land tenure holders were of many categories. Among other tenures the most important was the Jagir tenure granted to persons rendering

service to the state and to the community. The service tenures included holdings to Paiks (Militia), Sardar Paiks, Sarbarkars, Chaukidars, Patwari \ Bhui and village servants such as barbers, washermen, potters, astrologers, carpenters, blacksmiths, boatmen etc. While these service Jagirs dated from the earliest Hindu period, they remained undisturbed through the Mughal and Maratha period, though in some cases the holders were called upon to pay a small quit-rent. While Jagirs of all kinds were non-transferable, service Jagirs were not as rule hereditary, but were allowed generally to descend from father to son. Since they were granted on the condition of service, service Jagirs were resumed when services were not required.

While all villages were held and managed under zamindari proprietors, sub-proprietors and other tenure holders, the entire body of cultivators was divided into two classes: Thani (resident) and Pahi (non-resident).¹⁸⁹ The Thani cultivators had held their land with a hereditary right of occupancy but without the right to transfer. Though the Thani cultivator was assessed for revenue at an exorbitant rate and bore all miscellaneous cesses, he possessed the right of occupancy and could not be evicted as long as he paid the rent. However “in actuality this provision was a dead letter and the Thani cultivator did not have any security of tenure and his eviction from the land was an ordinary affair¹⁹⁰”.

The Pahi were non-resident husbandmen who cultivated temporarily, without any right vis-à-vis the land and were mere cultivators-at-will, cultivating on term basis. Brought as immigrants by the zamindars to settle on their estates, at low rates of rent and subjected to exploitation, unjust enhancement of rent and eviction, they had no house or homestead in the villages of their adoption. But long residence gave them the status of citizenship, although they had to pay ground rent for their house site.

Similarly the village shopkeeper, artisans and the servants in the village service system and other non-agricultural workers and laboring classes, who had no arable land, had to pay rent for their house site and were called Chandinadar. The Chandina tenure (cf. Parjawat of U.P., Kudi Kamini of the Punjab) was used for homestead land paying rent separately from the cultivable land.

189. SAB., vol. XVIII, (1877), 1973, p. 118.

190. Mishra K.C., Land System and Land Reforms – Orissa, Himalya Publishing House, Bombay, 1990, p. 114.

The evolution of the zamindari system from the ancient tenure of peasant proprietorship resulted in social consequences leading to a gradual breakdown of cohesive village life bounded by various rights and obligations in the community. While the villages came to contain a mass of poor tenants, under-tenants, agricultural laborers, artisans and servants and others vis-à-vis the zamindars, sub-proprietors and other tenure holders having varying degrees of proprietary rights in land, the age-old fraternal socio-economic relationships got demolished and conflicts of diverging interests were sharpened. This agrarian system assumed “a pyramidal social structure comprising the heterogeneous landed gentry at the apex and the tenantry which had lost its earlier secured right, at the base¹⁹¹”.

The zamindari estates very often possessed a numerous body of joint shareholders and a large number of proprietors of different grades and privileges with conflicting interests. While the landlords were sleeping partners, the collection of different kinds of cesses and dues over and above the exorbitant rent symbolized the tyranny and atrocity of cultivators and other inhabitants of the village. Further the tenants, artisans and servants were forced to provide their labor and services to the zamindar and his other officials, free of cost whenever and wherever they were called upon. They had to supply, particularly the tenants, various provisions or “Rasad”, free of cost and disobedience to provide “Bethi” (free labor) and Rasad led to severe punishment or confiscation of property and service right¹⁹². In respect of villages servants, in particular, it is important to note that the grant of service Jagir land, which was an incentive to stay in the village and serve the village community, under circumstances when money economy was conspicuously absent turned out to be an embarrassing disincentive with the advent of money economy. As they had nothing to fall back upon, they continued to accept the inequitable situation as bonded slaves in the changed agrarian system. The more tragic thing was that the service Jagirdars were entirely under the control of powerful zamindars and the village managers. “It was only in name that they were called village servants but in practice they were bonded labor of the zamindars whose whims and orders they had to carry out, lest they might be evicted from their Jagir lands¹⁹³.” For the village service system of Orissa it was the zamindars, Mukadams, Sarbarakars, Padhans and the wealthy cultivators who thus constituted

191. Mishra, op.cit., p. 116.

192. Mishra, op.cit., p. 116.

193. Ibid., p. 125.

the so-called “patrons” (Saanta) of artisans and servants (Sevak) as distinguished from the ordinary raiyats who as annual contract customers availed of their services.

The principal land tenure systems of inland Orissa comprising Samabalpur and the feudatory estates were zamindari Gaontiahi, Malgajari and rent-free tenures. The zamindari tenure, which covered the hilly and jungle areas, was held in large estates by chiefs of high local standing known as zamindars and Jagirdars. These estates of antiquity were feudal in nature and had originated as rewards for military service where the zamindars and Garhatia (headmen of Paik or Militia villages) had held their land under a kind of ill defined military tenure in perpetuity. They paid a fixed tribute to the government without any reference to land settlement. These zamindars were superior proprietors in comparison with Gaontias and Malgujars etc. and had full proprietary right over their villages.

In the zamindari areas of inland Orissa most villages were handed over to the headman for the management on the basis of temporary leases and were renewed on payment of “Nazarana” or tribute. The lessee headman owned the best land of the village as home-farm (Bhogra, cf. Sir land in U.P.) which got cultivated by free labor from the village tenants and thus earned substantial profits but only to sell out a large amount of Nazarana towards renewal of lease.

In the non-zamindari area, villages were held and managed by the headman known as Gaontia, whose position clearly resembled that of Patel of Central Provinces or Malgujar of Chhatisgarh. Under the native Rajas the Gaontias had no proprietary right over the village, although they usually claimed a hereditary right of succession.¹⁹⁴ The Gaontias held Pattas or leases for a short term which could be renewed by the payment of heavy Nazarana. They were generally of a higher caste and superior to common tenantry. In some cases these headman were original clearers of the soil and this class was specially identified by the term Ganjhu, who generally were superior to Gaontias and held their leases for a longer period than ordinary Gaontia.

In Sambalpur which was transferred to Orissa from the Central Provinces (M.P.) the status of Gaontia was different. He had full proprietary right over his Bhogra land, but full proprietary right over the whole village was not granted to him. The legal status of Gaontia was to some extent inferior to that of Malgujar who had proprietorship over the whole village, wasteland and the forest, unlike the former.

194. Orissa Feudatory States Gazetteer, Calcutta, 1910, p. 90.

The Malgujar was a revenue engager who had accepted the assessment of the village \ Mahal or a person with whom the land had been settled. Estate holders who had rendered services to Raja were recognized as Malgujars and conceded full proprietary right over villages held by them. However, the revenue manager of the village might be of various descriptions such as Patel, Mukadam, other classes of persons such as tribal chiefs, Raja's relatives, and others that had acquired proprietary status on quasi-feudal condition as Jagirdars or Talukdars. These were also recognized as Malgujars.

The Paiki, Gaontiahi, Malgujari and rent-free Jagir villages were all administered by a headman with the help of a village watchman, which latter office was shared by two persons, namely the Jhankar and Ganda, who were remunerated by the grant of revenue-free land. The Jhankar, who was considered as an important person in each village, also served as a tribal priest of village deities. The Jhankar and Ganda were also entitled to collect a grain cess from each villager including the landlords, like artisans and servants of the village known as "Khala Charni" on per plough basis. Besides, the Ganda was entitled to take all hides and horns of fallen cattle in the village as his perquisite.

As regards cultivating Raiyats whose lands had descended from forefathers claimed to have occupancy right equally with the Gaontia of the village though they were treated as Gaontia's tenants and could be ousted for failure to pay revenue. The raiyats with short occupancy were revenue tenants-at-will. The raiyats with the status of hereditary tenant cultivators had no transferable right in the holding. However, the dubious methods adopted by the zamindars, Gaontias, Malgujars and Thekedars forced them, for one reason or the other to transfer their lands paving way for exploitation and extortion, bypassing the legal bar to transfer.

The "Bhet-Begar" or free labor system which was fitted into the land tenure system of west Orissa presented a tragic and sorrowful picture. Each tiller sent his plough with a pair of bullocks and a man to cultivate the Bhogra land of the Gaontia once a year. Similarly he also supplied one person during harvest for a day to cut and harvest paddy of the Gaontia. Besides, the tenants also rendered a variety of miscellaneous services to the Gaontia in the name of Bhet-Begar. In some villages the Gaontia, Thekedar and zamindar used free labor for transportation of grains to market, for carrying of fuel wood from forest and for construction work. The conditions of artisans and servants and other labor was no better.

With increasing socio-economic injustice the patriarchal relation between the tenants and Gaontia gradually changed. As Mishra notes the greedy and rapacious behavior of the landlord strained the relation, and the strained relation got aggravated due to internal squabbles and conflict of interest between Lambardar Gaontia, head Gaontia and co-sharing Gaontia resulting in the division of tenantry into factions, enhancing their misery”.

6.6.4. Village Artisans and Servants.

Like in all villages in different parts of the country, Orissan villages too had a stereotypical group of artisans and servants constituting a necessary and important class, besides farm servants and government servants embedded in the structure of the village organization, which basically indicated the pan- Indian uniformity of the production structure and labor organization. While considering the village artisan and servants group in orissa, it is necessary to take note of the following:

Firstly there was a significant predominance of small villages, consisting largely of cultivators, assisted by a very meagre staff of village artisans and servants appointed and maintained by the village community and administered by a minimal staff of the government. Besides its own regional caste structure and composition whose distribution in the villages was narrow, the population of orissa contained a sizeable component of tribal population, which had its own villages in certain tracts.

In tribal tracts each village was dominantly occupied by a single community, whereas in non-tribal tracts of orissa, the village was shared by a number of castes. As such the village as a multiple caste unit, operated only among non-tribal villages and showed inter-caste interdependence which was an index of its social development. However, multiplicity of functional castes was not a feature of tribal village community, and essential classes such, as barbers, washermen carpenters and the like were not found. But as many tribal communities had accepted a settled way of life as against the nomadic and stable agriculture as against their traditional shifting cultivation, they also came to employ artificers to assist them in their agriculture. They were found to have adopted the traditional pan-Indian model of village system of production and labor relations so much so that whenever a new village came to be founded, the first care of the settlers was to secure their own staff of village artisans and functionaries and the needed ones were induced to come and settle, by small grants of land supplemented by grain payments. For

example, Angul was a district from a tribal tract Khondmals, where villages were of shifting character due to nomadic type of cultivation. Even so, the Angul district Gazetteer¹⁹⁵ noted that village artisans such as blacksmith and the menials like the washerman and sweepers existed and were allotted service lands and paid grains at harvest time. "It can be surmised" observed the gazetteer "that when the country was settled they were brought in and settled in the village by means of offering them service lands and paid grains at harvest time." Further it significantly noted that "when the new village was settled, it was settled on the traditional model." Similar observations were made by the Koraput District Gazetteer¹⁹⁶ that "among the tribals who constitute the bulk of the population, artisan classes such as barbers, oilmen, carpenters, washermen and the like are not generally found. Only a few people belonging to service caste found scattered today are more or less recent immigrants from the plains. But their services are confined to non-Adivasi people and have little to do with the tribals." Noting that the Adivasis neither need the services of a washerman or of a barber nor can he afford to purchase such services, as money (purchasing power) is scarce in his society, artisan and service classes have not practically developed, the gazetteer observed, " among non-Adivasis... many artisan castes are found and in this regard they are not very different from the people of the coastal areas, but the general practice elsewhere of paying annual remuneration to village artisans is not common."

Secondly, the entire body of cultivators who mostly need the services of artisan castes was divided into two classes Thani (resident) and Pahi (non-resident). As already noted while the Thani cultivators held their land with a hereditary right of occupancy and could not be evicted from his holding as long as he paid the rent, in actuality however this provision was a dead letter and the Thani cultivator did not have any security of tenure and eviction from land was an ordinary affair. The Pahi cultivators were non-resident husbandmen who cultivated temporarily on term basis and as tenants-at-will. There was thus no permanent "raiya" tenure and tenants could be evicted at any time by the Gaontia or the village manager. More often, the tenant cultivator of either description was oppressed by the revenue farmer or the village lease holder. While this state of affairs had introduced impermanence in tenure and instability in agriculture, the entire subsistence oriented production system was animated by material self-sufficiency, in the

195. 1908, p. 106.

196. 1966, p.246.

context of low productivity, crude technology and extensive poverty.

The small contingent of village artisans and servants was often less than the minimal required and many villages did not even have that facility. We do not have the data of different artisans and servants held by different villages nor do we have data on inter-village interdependency so as to find out the development of the village in terms of its social structure. Even so, in the following Table no. 6.6.4. (1) we have presented aggregatively the different types \ classes of village artisans and servants reportedly found working in the Orissan village communities, in the two regions separately. This does not mean that the entire complement of village artisans and servants was found in every village nor does it mean that every class of village artisans and servants was found in all villages.

The difference between the Inland and the Coastal regions as regards different types of artisans and servants is obvious. While Kamar, Bhandari, Dhoba and Kumbhar were common to both regions, the Carpenter and Jyotishi were not found in the Inland region. Similarly Jhankar, Ganda and Nariha, who were specific classes of the Inland region could not be found in the Coastal region. Further, the Brahmanical temple servants in the Coastal Orissa (Puri) stood contrasted with the tribal priest in the Inland Orissa. However these two groups were not “village service tenants” of the village service system, except Jhankar, though some of them held rent-free service lands. They were the peripheral functionaries as against the core servants of the village service group, the members of which were distinctively designated as “village service tenants”.

While the blacksmiths were pretty evenly distributed between districts and regions, the carpenters were so unevenly scattered between regions and districts that in villages of certain district or even in the entire districts, particularly of Inland region, the carpenter’s profession was practically unknown. For instance, in the Koraput district the carpenters, as a hereditary class did not exist in villages while there were a few of indifferent skill in towns. But as the Gazetteer¹⁹⁷ noted that when the extraction of timber started, classes which would weave baskets and mats began working on wood and became excellent sawyers. This was an occupation not of any particular caste in Koraput as it is usual in other parts. The principal reason for this, it seems, was that the agricultural implements in these parts were so crude and rough that the cultivator himself made and mended his own wooden

197. Orissa District Gazetteer, Koraput, 1966, p. 197.

Table no. 6.6.4. : Artisans and Servants in Orissa.

No.	Inland Orissa.	Coastal Orissa.
1.	Badhei \ Carpenter ^A	Coastal Orissa
2.	Lohar \ Kamar \ Blacksmith and Iron smelter *	Badhei \ Carpenter *
3.	Bhandari \ Barika \ Barber *	Kamar \ Blacksmith *
4.	Dhoba \ Washerman *	Bhandari \ Barika \ Barber *
5.	Kumbhar \ Potter ^B *	Dhoba \ Raoul \ Washerman *
6.	Karua \ Cobbler ^C	Kumbhara \ Potter *
7.	Jyotishi \ Astrologer	-
8.	Brahman priest	Jyotisha \ Nayak \ Ganak \ Grihabipra \ Astrologer *
9.	Jhankar *	See below, listed separately
10.	Jani and Pujari	-
11.	Kalo \ priest; (only in Sundargarh)	-
12.	Bahuka \ Sacrificer of animals (only in Kalahandi)	-
13.	Nariha \ Water carrier *	-
14.	Mihtar \ Sweeper	Mihtar \ Mehantar \ Ghasi \ Sweeper
15.	Duria \ Drummer	Bajdar \ Drummer
16.	Bajania \ Temple musician	-
17.	Dama \ Damba \ Bamboo basket and mat makers	-
18.	Bania \ Goldsmith (reported from Dhankamal)	-
19.	Ganda \ Watchman ^D *	-
20.	Dom \ Weaver	-
21.	-	Forest guard
22.	-	Bauri \ Firewood collector and laborer
23.	-	Gaur \ Goala \ Cattle tender

No.	Inland Orissa.	Coastal Orissa.
24.	-	Boatman
25.	-	Mali \ Florist, Gardener (reported from Puri district)
	A) In Sambalpur district carpenters being very few were not considered as "village service tenants". Also, in Koraput district there were no carpenters working in villages.	8. Temple servants (Puri district). a) Garabadu \ Brahman temple priest.
	B) There were potters villages in Koraput district.	b) Madhia Brahman (for attending on priests during performance of ceremonies)
	C) Not listed as a village servant in Sambalpur district.	c) Badus \ non-Brahman temple servant.
	D) Negi (clerk) along with Ganda listed as village service tenant.	d) Car-pullers of Jagannath
	-	e) Dancing girls

* Reported as village service tenants.

Source: Hunter's Statistical Account of Bengal and different District Gazetteers of Orissa.

implements or went to the blacksmith who more often attended to both smithy and carpentry. There was no separate class of carpenters as such. Further in Sambalpur district¹⁹⁸ the carpenters were so very few in number that they were not considered as "village service tenants" holding rent-free land. This state of affairs as regards carpenters was also found in the Chhatisgarh region of M.P., adjoining the Inland region of Orissa.

The Jyotishi, a professional astrologer casting horoscopes and fixing auspicious moments for ceremonies and rituals and for different agricultural operations etc., was found specifically in the non-tribal Coastal region where Hindu religion and ritual dominated, so much so that the 1911 census¹⁹⁹ reported that most villages

198. Bengal Dist. Gaz., Sambalpur, 1909, p. 82. Also Orissa Dist. Gaz., Sambalpur, 1971, p.304.

199. Vol. V, p. 44.

contain a small open shed in which the “Bhagbat” was recited before the assembled villagers. He was rarely found in the tribal Inland region dominated by Jhankar and other tribal priesthood.

Jhankar, Ganda and Nariha were specific to the Inland region. While Nariha was the water carrier by ancient custom who served the government officials camping in the village like the Kumbhar providing pots to them free, both Jhankar and Ganda belonged to the village watch and ward. Ganda was an ordinary weaver of coarse cloth, but was found working as assistant to Jhankar who was Kotwal \ Chaukidar. The noticeable feature of Jhankar in Sambalpur district was that, besides being a watchman, he was a tribal priest and was universally recognized as a village service tenant of fairly high status, ranking only next to the village headman Gaontia. It was his office to sacrifice fowls and goats and worship the malignant deity, which was supposed to haunt the village. Jhankar as a watchman was also found in the adjoining Chhatisgarh region of M.P.

6.6.5 The “Saanta-Sevak” system of village service.

We have termed the orissan village service system as “Saanta-Sevak” system. As Behura N. K.²⁰⁰ has noted traditionally the service rendering artisans and servants were commonly referred as “Sevak” (in Oriya) or “rayto” (asamis or tenants in Telugu) by their service recipients. On the other hand all service recipients were called as “Saanta” (c.f. skt. Samanta, meaning lord or master in Oriya). Saanta included not only “patrons”, but also all customers receiving tithe, by an extension of the usage of the term. They were also called as “Savkara”(literally meaning- a moneylender but also a wealthy man) by the service renderers who were called as “rayto” by the service receivers. The usage of this term in general practice is the same as that of Jajman, which is also a general mode of respectful address like ‘sir’ in English.

While the village artisans and servants referred to as “rayto” fits their description as “village service tenants”, their description as “Sevak” and the service recipients as “Saanta” smacks of master-servant relationship that fits the “patron” group they serve. But generally this service relationship was not true for all

200. Peasant potters of Orissa – a social study, Sterling Publishers Pvt. Ltd., New Delhi, 1978, p. 227 and also Patnaik N., Service Relations between Barbers and villagers – in a small village Ranpur, Economic Weekly, 1960, vol 12.20, pp. 732-742.

customers outside the patron group. But even if we were to call this patron client relationship as so called Jajmani system, it has coexisted with the village service system, which renders the former as an unisolable system as such, as we have noted earlier. However Bailey F.G.²⁰¹ has used the term “Jejemani” (sic.) and has suggestively equated or bracketed it with the tithe the system which refers to the fixed annual payment in grain made after harvest by the annual contract customers. While the fixed mode of remuneration is one of the elements in Jajmani, Bailey’s use of the term seems to be clearly conventional. Similarly throughout his book Behura²⁰² equates the term “Jajmani system” with the traditional village service system of “Saantas” and “Sevaks” and calls the later as traditional Jajmani system, without taking the note that both the systems are different and the system that prevailed in Orissan villages was the community maintained village service system and not family to family based dyadic Jajmani system. But “Sawakara” is an honorific term of address and is commonly used, while its equivalent term Jajman is rarely used or not used at all except by the Badus²⁰³, a class of non-Brahmin temple servants of Puri, Bhubaneshwar and other temple towns, who act as guides to visitors and pilgrims. They call their pilgrim clients as Jajman, for whom they arrange the boarding and lodging in addition to the ritual performances for them in different sacred places. Bailey²⁰⁴ uses the term “Proja” (skt. Praja), the terminological counterpart of Jajman, in his study of the Kond village Baderi in the Kondamal highland track of tribal Orissa, to stand for “client” and also uses it for “subject” as counterpart of Raja. But as Thurston²⁰⁵ has noted the “Proja” / Poroja / Parja as “hill cultivators found in the Agency tracts of Ganjam and Vizagpatam. The term Parja is merely a corruption of a Sanskrit term signifying a subject. It is quite certain that the term is not a tribal denomination but a class denomination and it may be fittingly rendered by the familiar epithet of ryot (cultivator). People use it in contradistinction to a free-hill man.”

201. Caste and the Economic Frontier, E.L.B.S. and Manchester University Press, 1972, p. 54, 97, 285 and also his Tribe Caste and Nation, Indian Branch, Oxford University Press, Bombay, 1960, p. 122.

202. Op.cit., p.30, 231, 232, 237, 303, 306.

203. Puri District Gazetteer, 1977, p. 129.

204. Tribe, Caste, and Nation, op.cit., p. 133, 169.

205. Tribes and Castes of South India, Government press, Madras, 1909, vol. VI, p. 207ff.

It has been explicitly stated that the complement of village artisans and servants was appointed and maintained by the village community. In particular, they were not employed by particular land owning / cultivating families as under the so-called Jajmani system, despite the later development of Zamindari. The Balasore District Gazetteer²⁰⁶ observed that “they are servants of the village and performs such services as are necessary to the community in consideration of holding service lands and receiving contributions in kind from each tenant. The carpenter, barber, blacksmith, washerman, and astrologer are maintained by small grants of Jagir Lands and contributions levied from the ryots. When no service lands are held, the village servants are remunerated entirely in kind. The contributions vary from village to village” to be paid to each class of village artisans and servants. Similarly, the Kalahandi District Gazetteer²⁰⁷ noted that “the artisans who formed part of the village organization were almost entirely maintained by the cultivators of the village for their own purpose and consequently it was only the cultivator who would bear the burden of taxation. This incidentally seems to be the origin of rent free holdings enjoyed by such people as blacksmith, carpenter and others.”

As Bailey²⁰⁸ has noted, the village artisans and servants “are public servants” and “the village is their master” and “the community controls its servants”. He²⁰⁹ further noted that “the dependant castes are of two kinds, the community servants and the field workers. The former are Brahmin, barber, herdsmen and washerman and so forth. The latter are mainly pans (untouchables). The specialized community servants are likely to have been few in numbers as they are today. I have distinguished them from the field workers not by their specialization but because they are servants of the community, that is, of all the clean castes. They are attached to no one particular person or family, but their work and their payment are settled by the community in the village council. The field workers were in a different position. Each family was attached as *proja* (subject) to a family of warriors, who were in this relationship, called “king” (*raja*). I have called this the patron client relationship.” Nothing could be clearer than the above statement.

Commenting on the characterization of the community maintained village artisans and servants as “village service tenants”, the Sambalpur District Gazetteer²¹⁰

206. 1907, p. 117.

207. 1980, p. 207.

208. *Caste and Economic Frontier*, op.cit., p. 106,109.

209. *Tribe Caste and Nation*, op.cit., p. 169.

210. 1971, p. 355.

quoted the settlement report to the effect that “they are merely village service holders and it is dignifying their position unduly to qualify them as village service tenants. They enjoy land in lieu of rendering service to the community. It naturally follows therefore, that if for any reason the person ceases to render service he loses the land”.

Historically, responsibility was laid upon the village headman to ensure the presence of village servants. These village servants were under his general control, but the sanction of the state was necessary for new appointments. Ever since the nature of the village organization or the village community, though a primitively democratic self-governing institution, came to be hooked up with the land revenue system of the state, and the extension of the frontier of administration and the consequent growth of state power through revenue officials and the land holders, it suffered a drastic change. In as much as it was convenient for the revenue authorities to treat the village as a revenue unit for the assessment and collection of land revenue it was natural for them to rely upon the headman, who was the linchpin between the ruling power and the village community. But the later day growth of zamindari, Jagirdari and the practice of revenue farming bypassed the old arrangement and cut into the power and position of the headman, who in many cases came to engage himself also as the revenue contractor of his own village.

In the zamindari and the jagir villages, except the chaukidar with police functions, the village servants came to be appointed by the zamindars and jagirdars. The chaukidar appointed by the state was regarded as a “public servant” in contrast to the appointees of the zamindars and the jagirdars. The Kalahandi District Gazetteer²¹¹ interestingly noted that in the settlement conducted in 1921 – 1924, only the chaukidars were described as “Gaon ki Naukar” and all other service holders – Nariha, Jhankar, Baiga, Kumbhar, Mali, Weaver etc. were recorded as “Thekedar ka Naukar” though all these grants were made rent-free or on favorable terms for rendering service to the village.

6.6.6. Service Relationships.

The network of relationship of a professional servant or artisan which was based on the traditional Saanta-Sevak system linked him to all caste groups including the peripheral castes of untouchables within the village and often stretched

211. 1980, p. 279.

beyond it to the neighboring villages on account of inter-village dependency. The mutual inter-dependence of castes due to the exclusiveness of their occupation made this network a two way process either for an artisan like barber or anyone else. All functionary castes in the service system served him reciprocally. The artisan or professional servant had traditional contractual relations with other constituent castes in the system for the supply of his services. This relationship existed between two families for generations on the basis of mutual obligation and good will. In lieu of his own services the village servant received services of other village artisans and servants on reciprocal basis.

But in the case of the rest of the village community the artisan or servant received from them a customarily fixed quantity of grain at the end of the harvest period of the year for his services. This has been described by Bailey²¹² and Behura²¹³ as a sort of “Tithe system”²¹⁴ which we will discuss in detail in sequel.

But the artisan or servant as a “village service tenant” had a different kind of contractual relationship with princely rulers, zamindars and intermediate tenure holders such as Mukadam, Sarbarakar, Padhan, Gaontia, Thekedar and substantial land holders and religious institutions (Temples), who instead of paying annually in the form of grains had allotted arable land to him in order to supply services to them in return. These have been designated as “Patrons”.²¹⁵ The relationship of these patrons and artisan servants was more or less in the nature of “master-servant” relation because the patron (Saanta) could dispense with the services of the latter (Sevak) unilaterally. This meant that the artisan or servant served the patron at the latter’s sweet will. And all others, whom the artisan or servant served on the tithe system basis were “regular customers”. The relationship between the artisan / servant Sevak and the Saanta on tithe system was based on regular and continuing contract. In this case neither party could break the relationship between them easily and without the mediation of the third party. This traditional relationship was based on mutual trust and goodwill. Whenever the services became irregular or the Sevak did not behave in the expected manner, the Saanta took the matter to the caste headman of the Sevak for settlement. On the other hand when the Saanta became

212. Caste and Economic Frontier, op.cit., p. 97ff

213. Peasant Potters of Orissa, op.cit., p. 227.

214. The Dictionary meaning of Tithe is tenth part of farm produce given for a support of Parish priest in the western world.

215. Behura. op.cit., p. 227.

a defaulter or stopped payment, the Sevak brought the matter to the notice of the village Panchayat for settlement. For instance, neither the barber Sevak nor his Saanta were free to leave each other without good reason. If a Saanta conspicuously dismissed his barber Sevak, he faced a lot of difficulty in getting another. No barber would serve him unless the dismissed barber gave his consent. If a new barber allured or induced by higher remuneration served him, the matter was referred to the caste council and the offender was outcasted.²¹⁶

A Sevak's son may contract his services with some or all of his father's Saantas or he may contract with families of other villages. He continued from year to year unless the contract was cancelled or renegotiated. The contract may be broken by the either party at the end of the year or any time during the year. In both the cases the Sevak got his dues for the number of days he had worked.

Continuous maintenance of service right by Sevaks over their traditional Saanta-clientage was possible because the organization of their services was based on a clear-cut delimitation of service constituency by allocating service responsibilities among their caste brotherhood as the tie was from the Sevak and his brotherhood to the village as a whole. When there was one household of a given Sevak caste the need did not arise of work allocation. The need for allocations arises when there is more than one household, such that monopoly to practice the profession is not violated and competition avoided. In this regard there were traditionally two methods. One was the rotation system and the other was allocation of area of work in terms of customers. "When there is more than one artisan in the village their services are distributed by themselves in agreement with the villagers and all artisans thus get an equal opportunity of earning their livelihood from the village". Such defined circle of customers was known as *Gharak*²¹⁷ in Gujarat, within which the given artisan household worked and none could deprive him of his customers, without severe punishment at the hands of the caste Panchayat. The caste rules prohibited a man from entering in to competition with another of the same caste-occupation.

E. A. Gait²¹⁸ refers to similar work circles when he notes that "the washerman and the barber work for a group of from thirty to fifty families and receive small

216. Patanaik N., Service relationships between Barbers and villagers, *Economic Weekly*, op.cit. p. p. 737 - 742

217. Census of India 1911, vol. XVI, Baroda, part I report, p. 324.

218. Census of India 1901, vol. I, part I, report, pp. 197-199.

monthly payments of grain and money”. He further notes that the carpenter and blacksmith “too enjoy a monopoly of work in a fixed circle of Jajmans who are partitioned among their hairs like other property. The Jyotishi or astrologer has no definite circle but he usually serves about hundred families”. For instance the Dhenkanal District Gazetteer (1972) ²¹⁹ noted that “the village barber’s service is hereditary and he serves the village or a part of it consisting of his entire clientele and there is little competition”. It further noted that, as with the barber, the washerman’s service was also “hereditary and with little competition.”

Almost all Sevak families continued to maintain annual contractual relationships with other Sevaks of different classes on reciprocal basis as noted earlier, and those who did not have such relationship hired their services on ready payment. This was so within the service group with the exception of carpenter and blacksmith, whose services became available, on piecework basis, the charges for which were haggled over by the concerned parties. But in the case of the regular customers on annual service contract paying on tithe payment basis, there was no scope for haggling or bargaining over the rate of remuneration since it was uniform in locality. And no extra remuneration was demanded if the quantum of service or goods was increased a little over the prescribed limit. It was the village community which fixed the scale of remuneration and it was the same community which controlled its Sevaks.

The community maintained “Saanta-Sevak” system for regular tithe paying customers very much resembles “The Asami” system of community maintained village service in the neighboring Central Provinces (M.P.), which will be discussed later in this chapter.

6.6.7. The Nature of Assessment and Tithe System of Remuneration.

The nature of assessment and stipulation of remuneration for services rendered or goods supplied under the traditional service system differed for different Sevak caste. For instance, in respect of the barber, a married man along with minor sons constituted a single unit, and grown up unmarried boy, constituted half unit. Women were obviously, exempted from any charge. There were two types of barbers. The Barika or Oriya barbers, generally had service alliances with the villagers and had their own Saantas and were paid annually on the tithe system, whereas the

219. P. 265.

“Kanmutia” barber worked for ready cash on job basis and was not a “Sebayat” or service holding Sevak and was never employed by the villagers to perform ceremonial functions which were always done by Barika on service tenure.²²⁰ The assessment in regard to the services of the washerman was also based on the size and composition of the Saanta household. A married couple with minor children comprised a full unit, while a grown up male or female child comprised a half unit.

The nature of assessment however of the services of carpenter and blacksmith were different from the other two ritual services noted above, because their services for making and mending agricultural implements were not required as frequently. In Orissa as elsewhere, one’s magnitude of agriculture depended on the number of draught animals he possesses. Hence each pair of animals engaged in ploughing was taken as a full unit for the assessment of remuneration of carpenter or blacksmith.

The assessment of remuneration for the services of the potter, who supplied a fixed quantity of cooking and storing pots, on annual contract as Sevak during the year, was made on the basis of fixed payment in kind. Additional service beyond the prescribed limit was either charged extra or not depending upon the kind of personal relationship one had with the Saanta. But whenever a different kind of service other than the prescribed one was taken from the potter Sevak, it was also paid back in cash or kind.

In connection with the potters’ services in Oriya villages it is important to note that the supply of the ritual and unconventional pottery was not covered in the annual contract and only non ritual and conventional wares required for secular and daily use were supplied in lieu of fixed annual payment. As Behura²²¹ has noted, the advantage of this system was that, though wares cost less, payment was made to the Sevak at a time when the granary of the Saanta was not empty.

On the other hand, one purchased the ritual and ceremonial pottery only when their necessity arose. And whenever the potter supplied such ritual and ceremonial wares to his Saanta, he received suitable payments and gifts in lieu of them. This Orissan practice contrasts with that found in Madhya Pradesh where the supply of secular pottery had gone the commercial or market way and the village potter

220. Patnaik N., *Service Relations between Barbers and Villagers*, op.cit., p. p. 737-742

221. *Peasant Potters of Orissa*, op.cit., p. 237.

supplied only the ritual pottery on fixed occasions which he used to renew his annual “Asami” contract. We will further discuss this aspect in connection with our study of M.P.

The usual system of annual payment in grains after harvest to village artisans and servants on annual contracts (Sevaks), fixed on the basis of assessment as noted above has been termed as a sort of tithe system of remuneration in return for services rendered by them during the year. Writing about the “tithe system (Jejemani)” of his study village Bisipara, located in the Phulbani district of Kandmal hill area Bailey²²² notes; “after the main harvest is gathered they (village servants) receive from each house which is in the system, a payment of paddy. Then when their services are required they get another payment usually in rice”. In his another village study of Kond village Baderi in the same Kondamal hills Bailey²²³ notes that “Jejemani servant receives an annual grain payment and in addition daily or ad hoc payments at less than the rate paid by the customers who do not make annual payments in grain”. He²²⁴ further notes that “not every household pays the tithe. Outcastes of course are excluded but among clean castes there is a division between those who pay tithe and those who pay cash. The division runs roughly between the original castes and those who have come later”. Similar situation as regard Koraput villages has been noticed earlier.

According to his account not every tithe servant receives the second or ad hoc payment, which is usually termed as perquisites, a term which Bailey does not use. In his village Bisipara for sweepers, cowherds and goatherds it took the form of a handful of cooked rice from each house each day. Generally as Behura²²⁵ notes, apart from fixed annual payment, village artisan or servant invariably received extra remuneration in the form of provisions, cloth and cash as perquisites, whenever he renders additional services or services in rituals or ceremonies. Gazetteer data on perquisites is too scanty and relates to the perquisites of washerman and barber only. The Sambalpur District Gazetteer (1971) noted that food was given to washerman when he took clothes for washing and special fees in rice on the occasion of birth, death and marriage at his client’s house. In respect of barber the Puri (1977) and Dhenkanal (1972) District Gazetteers noted that in

222. Caste and Economic Frontier, op.cit., p. 97.

223. Tribe, Caste and Nation, op.cit., p. 122.

224. Caste and Economic Frontier, op.cit., p. 98.

225. Peasant Potters of Orissa, op.cit., p. 228.

Table No. 6.6.7.
Mode of remuneration to village artisans and servants (Sevak).

A.) Inland Orissa.

No.	Village artisan \ servant.	Mode of remuneration etc.
1.	Badehi \ Carpenter ^A .	Remuneration data not reported.
2.	Kamar \ Blacksmith ^B .	Holds service land in almost all districts. 1. Gets fixed quantity of paddy per plough at harvest from each of his clients. (Angul 1908). 2. Gets a fixed quantity of paddy per plough at harvest and a fixed quantity of rice per annum for mending a plough share or preparing a sickle and same quantity of paddy for sharpening four plough shares. (Sambalpur 1909, 1971) Data in respect of other districts are not reported.
3.	Bhandari \ Barik \ Barber.	Holds service land in almost all districts. 1. Gets fixed quantity of paddy annually at harvest per adult unit in the household of the client and perquisites for ceremonial and ritual services (Angul 1908, Sambalpur 1909, 1971, Dhenkanal 1972.). 2. Paid in terms of rice \ paddy, but the general practice of paying remuneration annually is not common. (Koraput, 1966). Data in respect of other districts is not reported.
4.	Dhoba \ Washerman.	Holds service land in almost all districts. 1. Gets fixed quantity of paddy annually at harvest time, per adult unit from each of his client. (Angul 1908). 2. Gets fixed quantity of paddy annually per adult unit from each client and food on the day when clothes are returned after washing and perquisites for ceremonial and ritual services. (Sambalpur 1908, 1971, Dhenkanal 1972). 3. Paid in terms rice \ paddy but the general practice of paying remuneration on annual basis is not common. (Koraput, 1966.) Data in respect of other districts is not reported.

No.	Village artisan \ servant.	Mode of remuneration etc.
5.	Kumhar \ Potter ^C .	Holds service land in almost all districts. While remuneration data is not reported in all districts, in Sambalpur villages he was obliged to provide pots free to outside strangers and government officials when on camp. (Sambalpur 1909, 1971).
6.	Karua \ Cobbler ^D .	-
7.	Jyotishi \ Astrologer.	Reported only in Kalahandi district (1980). Holds service land. Other details not reported.
8.	Brahmin priest.	Reported only in Koraput (1966) and Dhenkanal (1972) districts. Holds service lands. Other details in respect of Dhenkanal not reported and in respect of Koraput, the mode of payment, reportedly, not clear though listed as village servant.
9.	Tribal priests. A. Jhankar. B. Jani and Pujari and Bhauka (sacrificer). C. Kalo.	Listed as village service tenants, holding service land, Jhankar worked as a priest and village watchman in Sambalpur villages. Received contribution of grain annually amounting a basketful from raiyats and Gaontia and the heads of all goats sacrificed (Sambalpur 1909, 1971). Reported from Kalahandi district (1980). Holds Muafi land. Other payments not reported. Reported from Sundargarh district (1975). Holds rent-free land. Other payments not reported.
10.	Nariha \ Water supplier.	Holds service land in all districts where he is reported. Serves water to camping officers. Other details not reported.
11.	Mehtar \ Sweeper.	Reported from Angul district (1908). Holds service land and gets a fixed quantity of paddy at harvest time from raiyats.
12.	Duria \ Bajania \ Drummer.	Reported from Dhenkanal (1972) and Kalahandi (1980), holds service land. Other payments not reported.
13.	Ganda \ Watchman.	Reported from Sambalpur along with Negi (clerk) as village service tenant. Holds service lands and receives contribution of grain from raiyats at harvest. As perquisites he collects all hides of fallen cattle in the village. (1909, 1971).

B) Coastal Orissa.

No.	Village artisan \ servant.	Mode of remuneration etc.
1.	Badehi \ Carpenter.	Holds service Jagir 1. Gets a fixed grain contribution annually per plough levied from raiyats. (Puri 1909, Cuttack and Balasore 1906). 2. Gets a periodical payment from cultivators in kind in the case of newly settled villages (Balasore 1909).
2.	Kamar \ Blacksmith.	Holds service Jagir. 1. Gets a fixed grain contribution annually per plough levied from the raiyats. (Puri 1909, Cuttack and Balasore 1906). 2. Gets a periodical payment from cultivators in cash and kind in the case of newly settled villages (Balasore 1909).
3.	Bhandari \ Barik \ Barber.	Holds service Jagir. 1. Gets a fixed grain contribution from each customer or from each raiyat on adult unit basis. (Puri 1909, 1977, Cuttack 1906, Balasore 1909). 2. Gets a periodical payment from cultivators and others in cash and kind in the case of newly settled villages. (Balasore 1909).
4.	Dhoba \ Raul \ Washerman.	Holds service Jagir. 1. Gets a fixed quantity of grain from each customer or from each raiyat on adult unit basis. (Puri 1909, 1977, Cuttack 1906, Balasore 1909). 2. Gets a periodical payment from cultivators and others in cash and kind in the case of newly settled villages. (Balasore 1909).
5.	Kumbhara \ Potter.	Holds service Jagir. Grain payments etc. is not reported. (Puri 1909, 1977, Cuttack and Balasore, 1906).
6.	Karua \ Cobbler.	Not reported.
7.	Jyotishi \ Naik \ Grihabipra \ Ganak \ Astrologer.	Holds service land. Payments in cash and \ or grain not reported. (Puri, SAB. XIX, 1877 \ 1976, 1977, Cuttack and Balasore, SAB. XVIII, 1877 \ 1976).

No.	Village artisan \ servant.	Mode of remuneration etc.
8.	Bajdars \ Drummers.	Holds service lands in some cases. Gets a periodical payment from cultivators in cash and kind. (Puri SAB. XIX, 1877 \ 1976, Cuttack and Balasore, SAB. XVIII, 1877 \ 1976).
9.	Mehtar \ Sweeper.	Holds service land. Grain payments etc. is not reported. (Puri, SAB. XIX, 1877 \ 1976, Cuttack and Balasore, SAB. XVIII, 1877 \ 1976).
10.	Mali \ Flower Gardener.	Holds service lands. Grain payments etc. is not reported. (Puri SAB. XIX, 1877 \ 1976, 1977).
11.	Boatman.	Holds service land in some cases. Gets a periodical payment in cash and kind. (Puri, SAB. XIX, 1877 \ 1976, Cuttack and Balasore, SAB. XVIII, 1877 \ 1976).
12.	Gaur \ Kine tender.	Holds service land. Grain payments etc. is not reported. (Puri, SAB. XIX, 1877 \ 1976, 1977).
13.	Temple servants (a) Madhia Brahmin. (b) Badus \ Non Brahmin temple servants. (c) Car pullers of Jagannath. (d) Dancing girls.	Holds Jagir land. Attends on priests – Gara Badus during the performance of ceremonies. Remuneration details not reported. (Puri, SAB. XIX, 1877 \ 1976). Remuneration details not reported. But receive their traditional remuneration from endowments to temple for their services. (Puri, 1977). Holds Jagir lands. Other details not reported. (Puri, SAB. XIX, 1877 \ 1976). Holds Jagir lands. Other details not reported. (Puri, SAB. XIX, 1877 \ 1976).

- A. In Sambalpur district carpenters being very few in rural areas, they were not considered as “village service tenants”. Also in Koraput there were no carpenters in the villages.
- B. In Koraput district, reportedly “mode of payment not clear” though listed as “village service tenant”.
- C. There were Potters’ villages in Koraput district where pottery was a conspicuous industry. (1966).
- D. Not listed as village servant in Sambalpur district. (1909, 1971). The mode of payment of remuneration in Koraput district, reportedly not clear though listed as village servant. (1966).

Source: - Hunter’s Statistical Account of Bengal (SAB.) and Orissa District Gazetteers.

life cycle rituals and ceremonies like birth, thread ceremony, marriage and death etc. when his services were essential, the barber and his wife were paid in cash and kind. Again the Sambalpur District Gazetteer (1909) noted that the Ganda watchman had “a most valuable perquisite” in the monopoly collection of horns, hides and skins of all fallen cattle in the village, besides the annual grain collections from the cultivators and the rent-free land.

While not every household in the village had tithe agreement with the village servants for annual service, those who did not pay tithe, paid for services in cash and kind most probably on piecework basis. To find out how universal was the tithe system, which is a fundamental characteristic of any community maintained village service system, we have in the following Table no. 6.6.7. (1) presented the available Gazetteer data on remuneration according to different classes of village servants, of the two regions separately. It must be noted that this district level data in respect of remuneration is scanty and not adequately reported and in many Gazetteers it is not reported at all. Out of eighteen entries in the table relating to the principal village servants, namely, carpenter, blacksmith, barber and washerman, the tithe system of payment covered only ten entries – five out of seven in the Inland region and five out of eleven in the Coastal region. Of the balance of the 8 non- tithe paying entries, there were 6 from Balasore district stating “periodical payments “as the tithe system had not developed in respect of newly settled villages. As the Gazetteer²²⁶ noted “in a small and newly established village, where the number of inhabitants was too small to offer a hope of sufficient remuneration to the barber or blacksmith, these (artisans and servants) were induced by grants of small areas of rent free land to take up their residence and hence complete the formation of village community. It was never intended however, that these jagirdars should supply the need of the villagers without payment and merely for the return of the grant of land, nor has it ever been the case that they have done so; accordingly they receive periodical payments from the cultivator in kind or cash in addition to their jagir. “While no details about the periodical payments are given by the Gazetteer, the periodical payments need not necessarily be monthly payments. But Gait²²⁷ in his brief notice on the orissan village service system and the customary remuneration to the village servants, as noted earlier, observed that “the washerman and the barber work for a group of, from 30 to 50

226. Balasore District Gazetteer, 1909, pp. 166-67.

227. Census of India, 1901, vol. I, part I, report, pp. 197-99.

families and receive small monthly payments of grain and money”. While we have not found any confirmatory evidence in our sources, to vindicate Gait’s statement of monthly payments, we note that it is the annual farm servants in Sambalpur district²²⁸ called Gutis, who received a monthly wage in kind and after harvest, from 8 to 10 maunds of paddy, according to the character of the harvest. This latter payment was known as their “Nistar” (yearly reward) or “Bartan”.

The two non-tithe paying entries relating to barber and washerman come from the tribal district of koraput, where as we noted earlier, services neither of barber nor of washerman were needed and used by the tribal community. While in the tribal society of the district artisan castes have practically not developed, the gazetteer²²⁹ noted, “only a few people belonging to service castes found scattered today are more or less recent immigrants from the plains. But their services are mostly confined to non-Adivasi people and have little to do with scheduled tribes... In this regard they are not very different from the people of the coastal areas, but the general practice elsewhere of paying annual remuneration to village artisans is not common”.

6.6.8. The Decline of the System.

We have noted earlier how artisans and servants in the village service system were reduced to the position of bonded slaves of the zamindars and other village managers, due the changed agrarian system. We have also noted that the village servants (Sevaks) catered to the needs of zamindars, Mukadams, Sarbarakars, Padhans, Gaontias, Thekedars, etc. who constituted the so-called “patron” group, as distinguished from the ordinary raiyats, who former, extracted their services mostly in lieu of the rent-free land that the servants held.

Going through the different Gazetteers compiled at various points of time, one gets the impression that, while extension of village service system was still continuing in villages of tribal tracts, it was found declining in larger and older villages where the system was firmly rooted. This phenomenon was non-uniform. Side by side with the tithe mode of remuneration, the non-tithe mode of payment was found to be almost of the same order if not equal. But this was no reflection either on the tithe system or on the annual contract service system. As already

228. Samabalpur District Gazetteer, 1901, also 1971, p. 322.

229. Koraput District, 1966, p. 246.

noted, the non-tithe payment was due to the difficulties of introducing the system in tribal villages. But on the whole, where the system was firmly rooted as Behura²³⁰ has noted the rate of annual remuneration had remained stagnant and was not revised with the rising prices and the cost of living. Further in the annual contract system there was no room for bargaining or haggling over the rate of remuneration, since it was uniform and customarily fixed in the locality. Again no extra remuneration over that stipulated could be demanded, if the quantum of service rendered increased over the prescribed limit. The servant or Sevak had to put up with it, in consideration of his relations with the Saanta. More often payments tended to be irregular and not as per stipulation. Consequently the traditional service contract could not retain its functional harmony. The artisans and servants tended to prefer ready payments in cash or grain and this considerably enfeebled the service system.

The inter-relationship under the village service system in the past was completely co-ordinated through a non-monetary economy. But when money embraced the village and tended to become the chief medium of all economic transactions, it also pervaded the traditional village service system to its detriment. Besides, the weakening of the traditional caste-occupation linkage also contributed to the weakening of the system. Many artisan families did not opt for the traditional annual contract, but preferred to work on piece rate basis for ready payment. Similarly many villagers did not enter into annual service contract but preferred to hire services on ready payment basis, whenever required. Thus both the parties tended to desert the system and services tended to be individualized.

6.7.0 The Asami and Ayath System of Village Service in the Central Provinces (Madhyapradesh).

Besides diversities in the region in ecology, economy and society, the village service system in the central provinces provides an illustration of its working, not only under regimes of princely states, but also with a predominant component of tribal population living in small villages and insecurity of cultivating tenancy, low productivity, crude technology and extensive poverty.

230. Peasant Potters of Orissa, op.cit., pp. 228-231.

6.7.1 Background of the Region.

Central Provinces constituted the central portion of the garland of princely states starting right from Rajasthan in the west up to inland Orissa in the east. When the Central Provinces was constituted as a separate administration in 1861-62, "a veritable territorial puzzle was pieced together and tracts were united which differed widely in circumstances, people and language." But it divides itself into a few very obvious regions. In the west we have the great Malwa plateau. The Chhatisgarh region connects central India with south India, just as Bundelkhand connects it to the north India. The contact with east is through Baghelkhand in the north half and Chhatisgarh in the south, Nimar resuming our contact with western India. Between Malwa and Chhatisgarh lies the Gondwana region.

In central India, village outside the forest tracts, was a compact collection of houses with cultivable lands surrounding them. In the jungle tracts, it was far otherwise than the nucleation found in the plains and low lying areas. In the jungle tracts, inhabited mostly by tribals, permanency did not distinguish the villages as regards their site, though a similar collection of huts will be erected elsewhere leaving the total number of villages as it was. In the plains and low lying areas, while farmstead was practically unknown, the village population was concentrated in one common residential "Abadi" for historical reasons of safety and security. After the establishment of British rule, the old custom having outlived its necessity at subsequent settlements, the Abadi area was separately marked out and each tenant or agricultural laborer was entitled to receive from the Malguzar or the headman, a free site for house inside the area. And the non- agriculturist also resided in it, in arrangement with the headman.

While the physical layout of the land, the climatic conditions, the classes of people residing in it and the administration of the state play an important role in determining the size of the village, the entire territory of the Central Provinces was dotted by the small villages. Villages with a population less than 200 were most common in districts, which contain large extent of forests and wastes, particularly in the Gondwana district of Mandla, Bastar district of Chhatisgarh, which were dominantly tribal areas. The Gonds were the largest group of forest and hill tribes. While they were found all over the province they were numerous in the plateau districts of Chanda, Bhandara, Jabbalpore, Balaghat, and the Chhatisgarh districts and the feudatory states.

In respect of land system, land tenure and tenancy, although each state had its

own system of land management with regard to the land revenue, certain features were common to all. In all cases, the state claimed sole proprietorship of the soil, though the initial form of the village was peasant proprietorship. In consequence however, in many states, no occupancy rights were allowed to actual cultivators, at least in theory, though in practice long occupation conferred a prescriptive claim to such rights. The land was divided into many classes. The Khalsa-kothar was land held directly by the Durbar. The Jagir land was usually held on service tenure and Muafi or lands given as free grants were of two types, viz. Dharmada or charitable grants and Chakrana or small allotments of land to palace servants, personal attendants of the chief, pensioned sepoy and other subordinates.

While the revenue system differed between states, the internal affairs of the village administration were managed by a headman, variously designated as Patel, Zamindar, Nambardar, Gaontia, Malguzar, Tadavi etc., assisted by a Patwari or village accountant, and a watchman variously known as Chaukidar, Havaladar, Kotwal, Jhankar, Ganda and GaonBalai, the messenger.

In view of the method of revenue farming adopted by most states, many of the headman had got engaged as revenue farmers, besides the Thekedars (revenue contractors). For instance the Sagour-Narmada territory of Gondwana was all a tract of revenue farming by Malguzars as they were called. The Patel, the revenue farmer, the Thekedar and malguzars in different parts of Central Provinces had very different positions and degrees of connection with the village. In some villages the Patel had remained for generation and on him the village community had depended for help in various ways. In other places, a mere non-resident court favorite who had never visited the village held the revenue farm. "There was thus ample opportunity under such a variety of conditions that the headman or the farmer had really grown in lapse of time, by his status in the village into something like a real landlord". This was what was happening under the later Malguzari Settlement by the British government. While the original headman was never the owner of the whole village, the headman under the Malguzari System had the great opportunity to slide into the position of the village landlord.

The Malguzari system which the British government introduced into the Central Provinces, outside of the Western and Eastern States, combined in it the features from the Bengal Zamindari Settlement with features from the North Western Province (NWP). The Bengal feature was the artificial conversion of Malguzars,

whether old Patels or revenue farmers, into proprietors of the villages. The northwestern feature was the settlement of revenue in a lumpsum for the entire village, which became “zamindari village” i.e. landlord tenure by one man or a group of his sons and successors. The Malguzar was made the sole proprietor of the village, only with large reservations of the rights of the original cultivators, so that we have the peculiar feature of landlord villages, only that the landlords had no power to interfere with rent payments or with management of considerable portion of their tenants.

The obvious implication of the above developments was that the political aspect of the old village community was badly destroyed. While the headman was the linchpin between the ruling power and the village community in the old order, was completely effaced in most parts of the Central Provinces by the revenue farmers, Thekedars, Malguzars and Gaontia, the village community was not destroyed, as the social cultural and customary aspects embedded in its structure, such as a caste system, the village service system, the farm service system continued to function without any radical change till “modern” forces crept into it.

6.7.2. Village Communities.

While considering the village artisan and servant system, which was a variant of the pan-Indian community maintained system operated in two tiers in the Central Provinces composed of princely states, it is necessary to take note of the following factors, as already noted.

The entire territory of the Central Provinces was dotted by small villages with its village community which had “not changed materially from the old fashioned stereotyped body of people, including just necessary classes to make it self-supplying in every economic aspect”²³¹. Even so in certain parts of the country there was no self-sufficiency and the requisite complement of village artisans and servants and of village officials was not to be found in every village, except in very old and large villages, and such villages were few and far in the jurisdiction of a Thana. But the village system and village community institutions had deep roots in the remote past and differed materially from those in other parts of the country, “though disturbed by accidents of history but not destroyed”. In modern times, throughout the Central Provinces, the villages were, like those

231. Census of India 1901, vol. XIX, part I, report, pp. 22-23.

in the Deccan, of raiyatwari type of severalty of holdings with a headman who managed the village and the usual staff of village artisans and servants. But with the assertion by the princely ruler as the sole proprietor of the soil, all cultivators were reduced to the status of the tenant.

The significantly predominant small villages consisted largely of cultivators, assisted by a meagre staff of village artisans and servants appointed and maintained by the village community and administered by a minimal staff of the government. Besides its own regional caste structure and composition whose distribution in villages was narrow, the population of the central India contained a very sizable component of tribals with their own villages in certain parts of the province. Secondly, by reasons of history and assertion by every princely ruler of each and every state of his right as the sole proprietor of the soil, the cultivator was a tenant cultivator with no occupancy right in his holding. There was no permanent “raiya” tenure and tenants could be ejected any time by the Gaontia or headman. More often the tenant cultivator was oppressed by the revenue farmer or the village lease holder. This state of affairs had introduced impermanency in tenure and instability in agriculture. Besides the entire subsistence-oriented production system was animated by material self-sufficiency, in the context of lower productivity, crude technology and extensive poverty.

6.7.3. Village Artisans and Servants.

The small contingent of village artisans and servants was often less than the minimal required and many villages did not even have that facility. While we do not have the data of village wise distribution of different artisans and servants held by a village, it has been recorded that in respect of essential artisans like Lohar and Barhai, “they are not found in every village, but in all villages of importance and do the work of two or three small villages lying close by”²³². While the distribution of carpenters (Barhai) was very uneven, it was more often the blacksmith (Lohar) who also did the work of carpentry along with his smithy.

In a majority of villages in Baghelkhand division, the census report²³³, as late as 1951 observed that there was no self-sufficiency in respect of village artisans and servants. While a contingent of them was to be found in old and large villages,

232. Jubbulpore District Gazetteer, 1909. vol. A, p. 23.

233. Vol. XVI, Vindhya Pradesh, part I, p. 31.

such villages were far and few. Similarly the Sagour District Gazetteer²³⁴ reported that large villages had two or three barbers to cater to the requirements, but in the case of small ones there was one barbers family to every three or four villages and he went round them on different days. Again, the Balaghat District Gazetteer²³⁵ reported that there was one Brahmin purohit/ priest for every 10 villages. The above situation generally shows that, being small in size, the villages did not contain a sufficiently developed caste structure and functional interdependence arising out of social division of labor, which makes it necessary to use supra-local services of specialists from the nearby larger villages. This indicates that only at the supra-local level caste hierarchy and functional interdependence had any real meaning.

Considering the different types of village artisans and servants working as the complement of the village service system, we have already pointed the following factors, namely, the smallness of the village size, the instability of the cultivating community due the impermanancy of occupancy rights in the cultivated holdings and the subsistence – oriented agriculture based on crude technology resulting in low productivity and extensive poverty, as responsible for minimal self- sufficiency with respect to retention and maintenance of artisans and servants in the village. Further, besides a significant component of tribal population, in the hilly and jungle areas, the interaction of terrain and economy prohibited the formation of large aggregates of population.

On the basis of detailed listings based on different Gazetteers and the early censuses, we found that the most common complement of village artisans and servants in the village was the Lohar, Barhai, Chamar, Nai, and Brahmin priest. The Kumhar was met with in Malwa and Gondwana regions, while the Dhobi was found working in Gondwana and Chhatisgarh. Besides the Brahmin priest, the tribal priest Baiga was found in Gondwana and Chhatisgarh regions. Even this minimal set was not found in every village as noted earlier. This has led to a vertical combination of occupations, which the 1891 Census²³⁶ noted and commented. Since in such small villages there existed no field for elaborate division of labor, one sometimes found combined in one and the same person, separate occupation that would otherwise be kept distinct. Thus the blacksmith was frequently also a carpenter, the barber employed himself in making leaf plates, the mat, broom and

234. C.P. Dist. Gaz. Series 1906, vol. A, para. 191.

235. C.P. Dist. Gaz. Series 1907, vol. A, para. 149.

236. Vol. XI, The Central Provinces and Feudatories, part I, report, p. 219.

basket maker, Basor found in Gondwana did the duty as musician, while the fisherman Dhimar worked as a water carrier and devoted a part of his time to the trade of grain parching and sale of waternuts and was found in parts of Malwa, Gondwana and Chhatisgarh regions. "These are not" the census report observes, "exceptional cases of hereditary pursuits, which were nearly always combined in the same caste".

6.7.4. The Village Service System.

Though not explicitly stated, the complement of village artisans and servants was appointed and maintained by the village community is indicated through descriptions in the different Gazetteers of Central Provinces. In particular they were not employed by particular cultivating families as under the so-called Jajmani system, though they had service relations with them on annual contract basis. The Mandla District Gazetteer²³⁷ described the Lohar, in contrast to Agaria as a "regularly appointed village servant". In most cases the village artisans and servants were described as paid in kind for their services by "customary contribution" from the villagers or each cultivator while the rate of annual payment was determined on per plough basis or the number of family members. Each cultivator was required to pay his "contribution" after harvests in return for the services. Further, as Daniel Miller²³⁸ has pointed out "historically, responsibility was laid upon village leaders to ensure the presence of village servants. For e.g. when the village lacked a working potter it was the headman who after consultation brought a potter with a grant of land and a house site, which was legitimated as land granted in exchange for services. In return for this relatively formalized establishment the village artisans and servants also received some further rights known as Hak, which are the basis for their claim to precedence over any other competitor from outside the village". The Ratlam State Gazetteer²³⁹ noted that "every village, in accordance with its size and importance had its artisans- the village Carpenter, Blacksmith, Chamar, Kumhar, Nai, all find their places in the village community. In order to enable these people to settle in a village, the state grants them some land, revenue-free, however they are paid by the cultivators at harvest time. Minor villages which are not in a position

237. C.P. Dist. Gaz. Series 1912, vol. A, para. 161.

238. Exchange and Alienation in the Jajmani System, *Journal of Anthropological Research*, University of New Mexico, vol. 42, no. 4, 1986, p. 538.

239. Gazetteer of Western States, Malwa, vol. V, part B, 1908, p. 262.

to have their own artisans, depend on the artisans of the nearest big village, the customary perquisites being given to them at harvest time.” The village artisans and servants were given a free site for house within the abadi, in arrangement with the headman.

As regards the remuneration paid to the artisans and servants, different district and state Gazetteers have characterized it in different ways. While these may be grouped under three categories, the categories exhibited a broad regional dichotomy. In respect of Malwa and Bundelkhand regions, most Gazetteers have described the remuneration paid for services during the year as “share of the produce” at each harvest; individually paid by cultivators which implicitly was a “contribution” towards the maintenance of the artisans and servants by the village as a whole. The description as “a fixed proportion of the village crops made over at harvest” as compensation of services is the same as above where “share” is replaced by “fixed proportion”. But it is important to note that in the above descriptions while share or proportion was fixed, the quantity of grain paid / received varied according to the size of the harvest.

The characterization of payments to artisans and servants differed in respect of Gondwana and Chhatisgarh regions and belonged to a different category. It is described by the Gazetteer in terms of “hak” or right to grain at the harvest, with adjectives “fixed”, “annual”, “customary”, “traditional” added to the “right”. While descriptions such as “fixed huk or grain dues, annually at fixed rate” as in Hoshingabad District Gazetteer²⁴⁰ and such quantity of grain due is, since traditionally fixed and customarily continued, it is described as “traditional dues of fixed grain per plough” as in Hoshangabad again, or simply “customary dues” as in Damoh²⁴¹.

In this context it is important to know that “hak” was not “right to remuneration” but “right to work” in the village and practice one’s caste occupation for the benefit of the village community in a monopolistic fashion untrammelled by outside competitors, while “due” may indicate a right or owing in conjunction with ‘hak’. As A. C. Mayer²⁴² observes “the strength of these rights varies from craft to craft. It finds its clearest expression among sweepers, where the right to

240. C.P. Dist. Gaz. Series, 1908, vol. A, p. 173.

241. C.P. Dist. Gaz. Series, 1906, vol. A, p. 118.

242. Caste and Kinship in Central India, Allied Publishers Pvt. Ltd., Routledge and Kegan Paul, London, 1960, p.70.

work and its perquisites in a village are exclusive and can be bought and sold. Other people (e.g. potter, drummer, barber) say that they would resist the attempt by anyone else to come and work in the village, but would not have a case to lay before the caste council unless the newcomer had inveigled clients away from them in the middle of their annual contract period. This would rather lie in the fact that such competition would exist only among fellow caste-mates and so would be tempted by the desire of both parties to avoid quarrels, which might spread to other spheres. In these cases, then, changes in clientele are generally made by agreement. But these are not property of incumbent, as for the sweepers.” While artisans and servants working in the village had general obligations to serve the entire village community and were compensated for those services, by all cultivators either directly by payment of grain at harvest time and / or indirectly through grant of land, there existed no property right in their service tenure.

A third category of descriptions in the Gazetteers about remuneration paid to village artisans and servants as “customary wage” (Betul and sagour districts of Gondwana, Sarangarh state of Chhatisgarh and Narashinghar state of Malwa) and as “fixed quantity of grain as wage” (Damoh district of Gondwana). In Damoh²⁴³ “customary dues” and “customary wage” are interchangeably used. The special term used in Jubbulpore district²⁴⁴ for customary grain payments as remuneration to “Parja” is “Jewar” (c.f. jaura) and has been described as “customary wage”. The question that needs to be faced is whether the grain payment made over the village artisans and servants are “wages” in the non-monetary economy of “redistribution”.

As regards the above noted differential emphasis between the regions about the conception of the nature of remuneration paid to village artisans and servants, it has not been possible for us to explain. Perhaps as indicated by H. Fukazawa²⁴⁵ in connection with the neighboring Maharashtra, the difference may be ascribed to the difference in the system of paying the land revenue to the government. The first method corresponded to “batai” system where a certain customary share to each artisan or servant was paid. The second method was in line with the system where each cultivator paid a certain fixed amount of his produce to the state and the village headman, after inspecting the harvest got every cultivator to pay a certain portion of his produce to each category of artisans and servants.

243. C. P. Dist. Gaz. Series, 1906, vol. A, p. 118.

244. C. P. Dist. Gaz. Series, 1909, vol. A, p. 213 and Grierson, Bihar Peasant Life, 1885, op. cit., S.V. 1193, p. 317.

245. Cambridge Economic History of India, Vol.1, p. 252.

6.7.5 The Asami and the Ayath System:

The above detailed community maintained village service system has been termed as “asami” system by Daniel Miller²⁴⁶. The traditional village service tenure is not ascribed to the Jajmani system even by modern writers on Malwa villages like K.S.Mathur²⁴⁷ and A.C.Mayer²⁴⁸ while the latter uses the term “Kamin” in his discussion which is not at all current and is not met with in the Gazetteers. According to Wilson’s Glossary of Judicial and Revenue terms²⁴⁹ “asami” stands for cultivator, a tenant, renter, non-proprietary cultivator etc. It also signifies an individual (isam) appearing in the list of revenue payers which is assessed “asamiwar”. The term “Ayath” stands for a stronger bond of “mutual dependence” between the patron and the client, as the dictionary meaning of the term implies. While the client, the service-receiver, is termed ‘asami’, each artisan or servant exchanging goods and services had a group of asamis taking traditionally stipulated services from him on an annual basis. Only a smaller proportion of asamis in the group had ‘ayath’ relationships, which referred to a stronger bond of “attached” service relationship, in an arrangement which was supposed to last, ideally over generations, probably comparable to the dyadic relationship in Punjab. The ayath relationship was an extension of the same principle which bound the asami and the artisan or servant. But as noted by Miller, the ayath system, with its deeper dyadic bond of attachment and much stronger obligations between the asami and the artisan or servant, which one is likely to presume it to be ‘patron-client Jajmani’, did not show a ‘clear link to land ownership which was absent in the ordinary asami relationship. While there was some association with wealth many service-receivers under ayath were of low caste, like landless laborers, landless tailors and weavers etc. sometimes a richest client was not an ayath. Ayath is not primarily a landlord service relationship.”

The cultivators became asamis of artisans and servants by mutual understanding and agreement. As Mayer²⁵⁰ notes, an understanding is reached at the start of the agricultural year for services throughout the year and the relation is taken for granted unless the asami or the serving artisan or servant specifically states that

246. Exchange and Alienation in Jajmani System, op. cit., pp. 535-556.

247. Caste and Ritual in a Malwa village, Asia Publishing House, Bombay, 1964.

248. Caste and Kinship in Central India, op. cit., 1960.

249. Op. cit. 1968 ed., p. 35.

250. Caste and Kinship in Central India, op.cit., pp. 68-70.

he wishes to terminate the relation for several reasons, including competition between particular artisans or servants. If only one family of a particular artisan / servant existed in the village, there was no question of choice and such families got “inherited” and there was no competition. But any competition between artisans /servants by fellow-caste mates brought about a change in the asami relationship. As he observes “interdependencies between individual craftsmen and their patrons may be changeable; their inter-relations as village occupational groups are more stable”.

While changes in asami relations occurred, any such change also needs to be considered for the following reason. In all parts of the Central Provinces, as already noted, the state claimed the sole proprietorship of the soil and mostly there was no occupancy right allowed to cultivators on a long-term basis. Hence they were all non-proprietary cultivators or tenants or asamis, - an important justificatory reason for the popular usage of the term. An individual cultivator was a tenant-at-will subject to eviction by the revenue farmer Gaontia or Thekedar. This instability in the cultivation tenure percolated not only to the farm service sector but also to the village service sector and agreements between asamis and artisans / servants could not but be annual. Further, annual renewal of asami relation became important and took place at the time of Divali festival or Akhatij (Aksayya Tritiya i.e. Vaishakh su. 3) when harvests are ready.

As described by Miller²⁵¹ the potter for e.g. carried ritual pottery on these days to all households in the village with a view to renew his asami relationship or to establish a new one, by supplying these pots; and those who accepted the pots were to be his asamis all through ensuing year. In the case of blacksmith and carpenter we come across a similar custom of renewal or establishing a new asami relationship in Jubbalpore, Sagour and Balaghat districts of Gondwana as reported in the respective gazetteers²⁵² when the Lohar carried small iron nails to drive one in the threshold of every cultivators house, on the occasion of Divali, Jiwati and Pola festivals symbolizing the renewal of asami relationships. For this he was paid a small present and this ritual was supposed to ward off the evil spirits outside the house. In the case of carpenter instead of nail, he drove a wooden peg inside the threshold and received a present for the ritual renewal. These examples show

251. Exchange and Alienation in the Jajmani System, op.cit., p. 539.

252. C.P. Dist. Gaz. Series, vol. A, 1909, para. 181-2; 1906, para. 189-90 and 1907, para. 143, respectively.

how the process of annual renewal was built around the ritual at the festivities at the time of harvests.

A dissatisfied artisan / servant may not renew his asami relationship on the next customary occasion. Although reasons given for changes in asami relationships were entirely economic i.e. disputes over payments, the asami system as such was not economic alone, as discussed earlier. An occupational caste renders a kind of service to another on the consideration of its economic necessities and the service receiving caste receives for its economic and / or ritual or religious necessities. In view of this the bi-directional process of interaction between castes as service-renderer and service receiver gets dichotomized into economic and ritual necessities. However this dichotomy does not seem to be as prominent and clear-cut in the case of the carpenter, blacksmith, chamar, etc. as in the case of Nai, Dhobi and Potter; though the former were found participating on ceremonial occasions and received presents from the asamis.

The potter's case as regards the dichotomy stands out more prominently. As noted earlier in the case of the West Bengal and Orissa, while Kumhar the potter was formerly an ordinary "village menial", a survey of Central Province Gazetteers compiled a little after the close of the 19th century shows that in some districts. Princely States he continued to remain a village artisan and in others he was found selling his ware on market principle in the village and in the weekly Bazaars. Like the washerman, the potter could find no demand except in large villages and had to carry his ware to the Bazaar before he could sell them. With his routine service relations with asamis within the framework of the village occupational structure having changed, he was found to exist in the village, meeting the ceremonial and ritual requirements of the village community as one belonging to the potter caste, and caste Kumhar was an important member of the village community despite his discontinuance of the secular services as a village servant. In his study of Potlodi village in central Malwa, Mathur K. S.²⁵³ observes that the ceremonial / ritual services rendered by a caste are unconnected with the traditional calling of the caste; and even if members of the caste give up their traditional calling and take up some other vocation, they continue to render ceremonial / ritual services in the village community. Miller²⁵⁴ calls this as "jati dharma". Mathur further observes that, "ceremonial service relations are found to be more durable and longer-lasting

253. Caste and Ritual in a Malwa Village, op.cit. pp. 141-42.

254. Exchange and Alienation in the Jajmani System, op.cit., p. 543.

than the simple and routine occupational service relations.... in the neighboring towns and cities.... often the ceremonial service relations survive the impact of city life which has everywhere demolished the occupational structure of castes. This is probably so because these services are symbolic in character and are not grounded in the hierarchical prejudices which characterize other aspects in inter-caste services.”

The dichotomous situation with ritual services by potters resting in the traditional asami system and the supply of secular pottery outside the said system which was commercialized and sold on cash basis, except in the case of those who had Ayath attachment and were supplied both ritual and secular pottery, contrasts a fixed “embedded” system of exchange which is the essence of asami or any village service system with a “disembedded ” flexible system of exchange. We have earlier dwelt on this aspect and have noted that the co-existence and complementarity of the fixed and flexible exchange system with the latter reinforcing former.

Like the potter, the services of Dhobi were availed of, not much for regular secular washing but only on ritual occasions to ward off impurities arising out of birth and death and also on ceremonial occasions of wedding etc. While much routine washing was done by households themselves, it was only rich asamis who engaged Dhobi for such washing. In view of this situation, besides the ritual services to the village community, the caste Dhobi was found working in occupations which were non-traditional to his caste, as there was not much demand for his traditional laundering services. While in some districts, the Dhobi continued to work as a regular village servant for his asamis on fixed system of exchange, elsewhere, where he worked as a remover of ritual impurities etc. rendering ritual services, he generally received cash perquisites, which depended on the paying capacity of his clients. In some districts both the secular and ritual services were paid in cash indicating the inroads made by cash exchange into the subsistence- oriented system of collectively maintained village service. Payments in cash for additional work or for work of ritual or religious nature co-existed with the more widespread practice of payment to village servants in grain after harvest.

6.8.0. The Vasvaya – Avat System of Gujarat.

Turning to the western regions of the country, comprising Rajasthan and Gujarat, the former was a region of Rajput princely states with Durbar (crown) and Jagirdari villages juxtaposed by some joint villages held by the Jats. While the villages contained a stereotypical set of village servants who were compensated for their service by a share of the produce annually at each harvest besides rent-free lands given by the Durbar or the Jagirdar to some of them, an important impediment towards the study of the village service system of artisans and servants of Rajasthan is the paucity of data. The information provided by the earlier Censuses and Gazetteers is scanty and meagre. Further, the system did not carry any specific name. In view, therefore, we have not considered Rajasthani villages and the service system embedded in their structure.

On the other hand, though Gujarat presents a mix of different types of villages – the Talukdari, Bhagdari / Narwadari and Senja had a village service system named as Vasvaya existed. In the following we present a brief study of the Vasvaya / Avat system of village service in Gujarat.

6.8.1. The Village Communities and Village Types.

The modern state of Gujarat covers the former princely states of Kutch, Sourashtra (Kathiyawad) and Gujarat proper divided into two regions, North Gujarat and South. With the identity between the revenue village and the sociological village being generally close in Gujarat as in the case of Rajasthan and Maharashtra, the villages were tightly nucleated units of settlement distinctly marked out from other such units. The inhabitants of villages of different sizes, small, medium and large differently located geographically and ecologically with their own caste distribution wielded themselves together into village communities with their own local organization and government which differed in character in different types of villages, their body of detailed customary rules and the little staff of officials, functionaries, artisans and traders. The village community has to be considered in two parts namely, the village government and the organization of village life and society.

Most village communities in Gujarat were purely agricultural and generally revealed a rural system of economy chiefly based on peasant proprietorship. But there were exceptions to this as there were non-raiyatwari tenures prevalent in

some parts. The northern region of Gujarat remained diversified with the existence of several tenures juxtaposed side by side the raiyatwari village, with the joint or share-hold villages known as Bhagdari and Narwadari and the remains of chiefships of Rajput families much broken up and known as Talukdari villages. In the princely states of Kutch and Sourashtra the villages were also of Talukdari type.

The Talukdari or landlord villages were held by overlord families descending from aristocrats, warriors and officials of mediaeval dynasties and the size of such estates varied from one to some dozen villages. The overlord families were called Gameti, Grassia or Bhuniya in case of Hindus (Rajputs) and Kasbati or Maleki in the case of Muslims. The Talukdars were absolute proprietors of their estates subject to the government demand fixed for a term of year and exercised a variety of seigniorial rights and privileges. All the Talukdari estates were held in shares after the original ancestor passed away as the members of the family jointly succeeded in equal right. The chief retained a portion of his land as “Gharkhed” (exactly the sir of upper India and Bengal) worked by his own “house servants”. He also granted rent-free holdings to Brahmins, Charans and village menials. The village where the Talukdar resided was called the Durbar and most of the features of the overlord right observed in the other parts of the country were reproduced. Such Talukdari estates comprised one or two villages, though some were large, but most of them had as many as 50 to 200 joint owners existing in each single estate. The peasants on fully assessed lands were the tenants of the Talukdar.

Turning to the joint villages held by peasants, known as Bhagdari i.e. held in shares and Narwadari i.e. held in shares for distributing the burden of revenue, which is exactly like the Bhejberar of North-Western Province (U.P.), we notice that a good many such villages were located in Kaira and Broach districts and a few were also found in Surat and Ahmedabad districts before the British settled them. In Kaira, the joint villages, which were Narwadari, were held entirely by Kunbis. In Broach where these villages were Bhagdari, which were clearly the pattidari villages held on ancestral shares, were mostly held by Muslim proprietors of Bohra class.

The lands of joint or share-hold villages were divided into village site, shared lands and village common. The shared lands and house sites as well, were divided first in to several major divisions, (mota bhag). Each major division was owned by a kin group of peasants, who divided it into numerous sub-divisions as per

rules of inheritance (Peta Bhag or Patti of northern India). Each Mota Bhag was represented by a head of their senior most family of the division and the representatives of all major divisions were village headmen (matadars), who jointly managed the common affairs of the village, gave some part of the common land to village servants in Inam, let out the rest to the tenants, or sold or mortgaged it when necessity arose. The revenue of the village was first apportioned among major divisions. Each major division was responsible for the amount apportioned to it and all major divisions were jointly responsible for total sum. The difference between the Narwadari and Bhagdari villages is assigned merely to certain methods of revenue assessment, the details of which need not be gone into. But it is necessary to note that the distinction in itself does not imply any necessary variety in the village constitution.

The joint or the share-hold village gets turned into a raiyatwari one, if the holders chose to give up any surplus waste land to the government and every sharer preferred to pay the assessment of fields in his holding individually rather than the old scheme of sharing. Ordinary rayatwari villages were termed “Senja” as there was no sharing of land or revenue burdens. All were together on the same footing and united under one headman. The ordinary peasants were classed into permanent peasants (Khatedars, equivalent to Mirasdars in the Deccan), tenants and non-resident cultivators. Some land in the village was also held in Inam by village officers and servants, or sold, mortgaged to outsiders or Girasias. The land revenue was variously collected as lumpsum per Bigha or a certain share of the produce or rate per plough.

6.8.2 The Vasvaya-Avat System of Village Service:

Against the background of these types of villages, let us now consider the village service system of artisans and servants. In Gujarat including Kutch and Saurashtra, the village artisans and servants were known as “Vasvaya”.

Mujumdar²⁵⁵ has noted that the village community in Gujrath was “exclusively composed of husbandmen. All other residents from shopkeeper to sweeper were strangers within the gate, not regarded even by themselves as having any inherent right to a voice in the management of communal affairs. This was especially true of artisans. He was distinctly known as the settler (Vasvaya) – (it may also mean

255. Cultural History of Gujrat, Popular Prakashan, Bombay, 1965, p.198.

craftsmen from vyvasaya, the craft)-the man who has “come to stay” in the place for the convenience of the original inhabitants. He was not bound down to the place of residence by a special contract to the natives of the village; he could go if he so desired to some central place with more local facility for exercise of his craft”. Pocock D. F.²⁵⁶ observes that “the general term for specialized and servant castes is Vasvaya (“from vasavavun =to populate or settle”). He continues to observe that “the justification for this term is found in several histories of the highest villages. Of one village it is recorded of a certain man several generations after the founding ancestors, that he brought in and settled, Brahmins, Barbers, Potters etc. In smaller villages the situation is not so simple. There the Patidars are in many instances descended from refugees and landless families from larger villages. The artisan and servant castes who had similar motives, followed them there. It was rare to hear that they have been given land in return for their services; the majority were share croppers”. A good many of the non- agricultural residents, all “strangers within the gate” of the village or “Udhad” or unsettled as opposed to cultivators who were regarded as settled or attached to the land, were not in the group of Vasvayas as village artisans and servants of the “village establishment” Writing about the village communities in Saurashtra (Kathiyawad) the Gazetteer²⁵⁷ observed that classes other than the cultivating ones had “to settle terms of their residence with the chief or the proprietor and have to pay taxes according to their calling”. “Udhad Vero” was the tax “levied from shopkeeper, artisans, laborers and villagers other than cultivators”. In any sense of the word “Settlement”, not all settlers were Vasvayas and recognized by the village community as such.

Alternatively, not all craftsmen settled in the village were Vasvayas, if the term is interpreted in the sense of craftsmen from the word ‘Vyavasaya’ restricted to those “engaged in such an occupation, organized as a guild or union”. As the 1891 Census of Baroda²⁵⁸ observed “the artisans are not patronized so much for their skill or industry as for forming indispensable adjunct to the self sufficing village communities. From this point of view, the village watchmen and the scavengers also form as necessary elements of the village community as carpenters and blacksmiths. In fact very few of the artisans enumerated form part of the village communities”. For instance the weaver was nowhere a Vasvaya. But

256. Kanbi and Patidar: A Study of Patidar Community of Gujarat, Oxford University Press, Oxford, 1972, pp. 30-31.

257. Bombay Gazetteer 1884, vol. 8, pp. 170-74.

258. P. 427.

craftsmen whose services would be regularly required by all members of the village community were included in the Vasvaya group. Thus while all artisans or craftsmen were not included in the Vasvaya service system of the village, the village service group was not composed only of artisans or craftsmen. Further, there was also a combination of occupations pursued, so that it was difficult to say who was a pure artisan. Take the case of Dhed, who mainly functioned as a village watchman, was also a weaver of coarse cloth, like his counterpart Mahar, in the Maratha country.

According to Wilson²⁵⁹ Vasvaya refers to the “village establishment of artisans and servants; the land assigned to them for their services”. Such land was termed as “Waveyly pusseta” granted to classes originally instituted. While “Waveyly refers to the privilege of lands granted to village servants and officers, “Pusseta”²⁶⁰ means rent-free lands allotted to different orders of village servants in Gujarat, also assignment of the same for religious or charitable purposes. The Waveyly Pusseta land could not be sold and was held on hereditary basis, as long as the holder artisan / servant could render service and had right to employment as Vasvaya. “Their interest in the land was usufructory. The patronage of the village servants was always dependent on the village community”²⁶¹.

In contrast to the above, the lands parcelled out to the “village officers” were called “Watan” as in Maharashtra, and were hereditary and descended by ordinary law of succession. The Watan of these officials may belong to an entire family, but one member of that family was to be the Desai, Mujumdar or Patel. The partners of the Watan paid such an officiating individual extra emoluments. While the lands and the remuneration of these officials could be sold- and in fact they were sold to others- at times the office and the land were usually separated by sales, and sometimes the purchaser performed the duties. While the Patel or the village headman, besides his Watan received fees from various land alienations in the village and many allowances and gratuity from the government, the village artisans and servants (Vasvaya) received no other recompense beyond their service lands which were given to them as a small allowance to tie them up to the village of their residence and serve the community. The rest and the greater part of their earnings depended on the services they did to the cultivators and the others. Besides

259. Glossary of Judicial and Revenue Terms, Munisiram Manoharlal, Delhi, 1968, op.cit.,p.

260. Glossary. *ibid.*, S.V. 134, p. 405.

261. Choksey R.D., *Economic Life in Bombay Gujarat (1800-1830)*, p. 16.

rent-free land, one of the chief sources of these artisans and servants consisted in the fixed share of each year's produce, paid to them by each cultivator, where the village was "Senja" or raiyatwari village comprising independent cultivators. In the case of landlord villages some modification was found which will be noticed below, where the dues and the services of the Vasvayas differed. Further the differences were not only in the dues and services, but also in the composition of Vasvaya group between regions and villages within Gujarat.

Each type of artisan / servant had a monopoly to practice his profession within the village. "When there is more than one artisan for the particular craft in the village their services are distributed by themselves in agreement with the villagers and all artisans thus get an equal opportunity for earning their livelihood from the village." Such a defined circle of customers was known as "Gharak"²⁶² within which he worked and no one else could attempt to deprive him of his customers without severe punishment at the hands of the caste panchayat. This has a parallel in respect of Bihar and Orissa, which we have noticed earlier. The duties and the remuneration of each group were fixed by custom and the caste rules prohibited a man from entering into competition with another of the same caste-occupation.

The method and mode of payment for professional services rendered by Vasvayas consisted in their taking, as noted earlier, a recognized share of the produce reaped and brought to the threshing floor. This method was known as "Avat pratha"²⁶³ or Avat system. Jan Breman²⁶⁴ and I. P. Desai²⁶⁵ also refer to the term. The Rajkot District Gazetteer notes that "the commodities given to artisans by wages include food grains, pulses, sometimes a bundle of fodder and seasonal vegetables. The payment is generally made at the time of harvest. This system of payment is known as Avat Pratha." The term is possibly derived from the root *ava* which stands for income or earnings or *amadani* (cf. *aya*).

Both Desai and Breman have unnecessarily equated the term *avat* to "Jajmani". According to Breman, the network of exchange relationship between the cultivators and Vasvayas is called "*avat*" and he by interpretation equates it as a term for the so-called Jajmani system current in south Gujarat. Obviously the term does not

262. Census of India 1911, vol. XVI, Baroda, part I, p. 328.

263. Gujarat District Gazetteer, Rajkot, 1965, p. 241.

264. Patronage and Exploitation..., op.cit., p. 35 and 261.

265. Patterns of Migration and Occupation in a South Gujarat village, Deccan College Post – Graduate Research Institute, Pune, 1964, p. 90.

have any indication of Jajmani in its meaning as noted above. Since Breman is studying the Hali system of labor in the Anavil Brahman village where the said Anavils are the dominant land owners and power elite, “the social economy of the area is thus organized around the Anavil land owners, almost all other castes being in functional dependence on them”. He further quotes Joshi²⁶⁶ who confirms the above to the effect that “it may be said that it was the group of Anavils on whom more or less, depended the other caste groups of the village for their earnings.” Breman’s contextual interpretation implies an unequal exchange relationship, arising out of economic dependence, low caste status and political subordination. And in any traditional closed village economy of land and grain where non-agricultural population is usually dependent upon cultivators whom they serve, there need not necessarily grow unequal exchange relationship. While Jajmani is a particular form of dyadic exchange relationship, which need not be universalized, other aspects of Jajmani such as the “Jajmani right” need to be spelt out and these are missing. In his presentation Desai also refers to Vasvaya as those who were settlers dependent on land owning class with their subordination “formalized”. He quotes the case of potters and carpenters whom “both were part of the Avat system (Jajmani) and the two of them were also village servants and they had a piece of land given to them in lieu of service”. While the description is all right, bracketing the Avat system with Jajmani is unnecessary and unwarranted. In the instances noted above the catchy term Jajmani seems to be used conventionally, without justifying its appropriateness.

6.8.3. Modifications in the Vasvaya – Avat System by Village Types.

In the following we notice the modifications in the Vasvaya-Avat system, found in the landlord (Talukdari and Girasia) villages and also in the Bhagdari and Narwadari villages.

In Talukdari villages of Kutch and Saurashtra as already noted, the Vasvaya had to settle the terms of their residence with the state chief or proprietor and had to pay taxes (Udhad Vero) like their counterparts in N. W. P. (Parjawat) and the Punjab (Kudhi Kamini) according to the nature of their calling, and one of the most striking obligations was to give some amount of “Veth” or unpaid labor

266. Joshi V.H., Economic Development and Social Change in a South Gujarat Village, The Maharaja Sayajirao University, Baroda, 1966, p.23.

service, besides their professional one for the grain received from the proprietor.

As the Kathiyawad Gazetteer²⁶⁷ records, the grain which was to be given to Vasvaya and others was taken up from a heap called “Mendhara” which was roughly calculated as sufficient to satisfy the demands of Vasvayas and Lagvis and also to defray the state “Kharjat” (expenses) of the village. The Lagvis²⁶⁸ were those who had a Laag or a right to share in the grain. Such persons may be artisans, priests of the village temple, or any person entitled by a special grant.

Where the landlord was entitled to a fourth share of the crop according to the custom of each village the total grain produce was divided into 5 equal shares one of which was divided among Vasvaya, Lagvis or claimants and devoted to other miscellaneous expenses.

The unit of payment in kind fixed per pair of bullocks (plough unit) or per person was locally known as “Map” or measure. The payment in kind for cash crops like groundnut was made as “Sukhadi” a local term which means sweets, i.e. a voluntary payment, which was customary and all peasant households abiding by it. However the Vasvaya and others had no claim on it as it was given at the pleasure of the cultivator / landlord.

In return for this grain payment, besides the professional services, the following extra services were performed by the Vasvaya without further remuneration. For instance the potter had to supply the revenue and the police officials with earthen pots and provide village guests such as Bhats and Charans with the necessary vessels. He was also required to fetch water and bake bread for those whom he was bound to supply vessels and clean their dishes. Similarly, the Barber was required to make beds in the landlord’s house, light lamps and shampoo the legs of the members of the landlord’s family. He was also required to fetch supplies from the grocer’s shop and at night act as torch- bearer. If there were several families of potters and barbers, the grain was divided among them and they took duties by turns. These two Vasvayas were exempted from “Udhad Vero” which other Vasvayas were bound to pay.

267. 1884, pp. 213-14.

268. In the Punjab where the term (Lagi) is also used M.J. Leaf notes that Lagi is a receiver of traditional dues, Lag paid in kind. The term is also used for actual contractual payment and not a ritual due or “traditional payment” of a gift that is not contingent upon performance of specific duties. See his “Information and Behavior in a Sikh village, Social Organization Reconsidered”, Oxford University Press, Delhi, 1972, pp. 95-96.

The Dheds were required to fetch fuel and fodder for the landlord and his officials and carry letters and messages. The Bhangis were required to act as guides, sleep in the grain yard during harvest and keep watch on the grain. They were also required to publish orders in the village by beating the drum. The other Vasvayas were bound to work for the village landlord whenever called upon, taking duty by turn whenever there was more than one of the class.

Outside the group of Vasvayas, the Vagharis were required to provide tooth-sticks for the landlord's family and his guests for which he received a day's food. The Shepherds of Rabari and Bharwad caste were required to provide milk for the landlord and his guest, by turns. As the gazetteer notes, the above system of extra services could be carried out only in the villages where the landlord was resident. In towns, he was required to obtain such services at the prevalent wage rates.

A glimpse of a Talukdari village in the modern times before the abolition of the said tenure, is available in G. P. Steed's²⁶⁹ article on village Kasandra in North-Gujrath in Sannada taluka of Ahmedabad District held by Vaghela Rajputs. While the purpose of the article is to study personality formation it gives a brief background of the village under talukdari tenure. The Rajput overlords were a class of absolute hereditary proprietors with an inordinate control over their land, which they exercised over the tenants and the other villagers, which allowed them to press the villagers into whatever political or economic activities they desired. "The overlord rule locked the village population into an authoritarian and quasi-political system of Raja- Praja allegiances."

In the village the "Praja" were traditionally attached to particular lineage and branches of the ruling overlord group according to ruler's genealogically determined shares in the village lands. The shares in the land concomitantly determined the shares in the subject population. Attachment of Praja to rulers was originally formed under various circumstances in the long history of settlement of the village. Such inherited lifelong attachment, according to Steed affected the villager's "self-image" as a "subject" as well as his attitude and behavior towards rulers and other subjects in the village.

"The population of Kasandra, divisible first into rulers and subjects under the overlord tenure system, and divisible again economically into a number of

269. "Notes on a approach to a study of personality formation in a Hindu village in Gujarat", in *Village India*, ed. McKim Marriot, the American Anthropological Association, University of Chicago Press, 1955, pp. 102-144.

interdependent classes, was still further differentiated into some 26 castes and sub-castes which were hierarchically ranked according to the traditional pattern. The hierarchy of castes tended to draw the entire village population into an inter-caste network of ritually ranked economic exchanges, mutual obligations, village festivals and ceremonies. Virtually everyone in the village was bound by this network throughout one's life. The caste groups remained important as holders of occupational monopolies."

The complement of Vasvaya in such Talukdari villages as Kasandra, in contrast to the government or Khalsa villages operated, Steed notes, as a "Serf-like class of hereditary retainers, who had belonged to the village overlords under their old regime. While members of many castes were bound to perform compulsory labor (Veth) for their hereditary patron landlords, the artisans, who occupied lower agrarian status, were also grouped, as members of the class of compulsory labourers like "Ubhardhis" or landless labourers.

We have already noted that in terms of land system and method of management the share-hold villages viz. Bhagdari and Narwadari villages constituted an important type of village community of peasants mostly found in the central Gujrath. As regards the Vasvaya system comprising various artisans and servants in such share-hold villages we summarize below Fukazawa's²⁷⁰ interesting discussion.

Observing that a village establishment of Vasvaya did exist in the share-hold as well as in the landlord and the simple "Senja" villages, Fukazawa quotes the evidence of early British officers recorded in around 1820 AD about share-hold villages of Gujrath to the effect that "every village had its separate village establishment comprising among others the Vasvaya", that "Pusseata land was commonly allotted to the Vasvaya and they were appointed and paid by the village and they received a certain amount of grain per plough." These seem to indicate, Fukazawa notes²⁷¹ that "these servants were not employed by certain specific families by dividing the sphere of service in the village like under the Jajmani system of the later period, but were, as a rule employed and supported by the village as a territorial whole". And "when servants were granted certain rent- free land by the village it was as rule located in the common land of the village."

270. "Structure and Change of the sharehold village in the 19th century British Gujarat", Hitotsubashi Journal of Economics, Hitotsubashi University, Tokyo, vol. 14, no. 2, 1974, pp. 9-16.

271. Op.cit., p. 16.

Contrary to the above, Fukazawa²⁷² notices the evidence of W.G. Pedder in 1860 AD who reported that “all village servants are distributed among various Mooksh Bhags (major divisions) and may not transfer themselves from one to another.” On the basis of earlier reports of 1820 AD it was presumed that the village servants were employed by the village as a territorial whole. But in the light of Pedder’s findings if the type of employment of village servants was Bhag-specific, by distribution of them among different major divisions, that would be caused by the general decay and change of the village system in general. At any rate the above state of village servants as reported by Pedder that the servants were employed not by the village as a whole, but by major divisions viz. by families having shares in the division and were not allowed to shift to another in 1860 AD, has been interpreted by Fukazawa²⁷³ in two ways:

(1) “As presumed earlier these servants were at the outset employed by the village, but during the first half of the last century as the number of share-holders and servants increased on the one hand, and on the other the basic trend of British rule in general, the trend of destroying the territorial solidarity of the village, loosened the jointness of the village so that the village servants came to be divided among major divisions of the village”, though “they had not been employed by the division from the beginning but originally by the village as a whole”.

(2) “Against the above, the second interpretation is as under. The reports earlier in 1820 were at any rate vague about the servants of the village. In the share-hold village both the share- holders and the land were divided into several divisions (Mota Bhag) from the outset so that it is at least logically feasible that servants were employed by the divisions from the beginning at least in a large village.

Though Fukazawa favors the first interpretation, we may compare the Gujarat share-hold villages to those of the Upper-Indian joint villages. As pointed out by Baden Powell, the former villages in principle were comparable to the latter Pattidari and Bhaiyachara villages. These latter were divided into Pattis after the advent of the British rule, to facilitate the fixation and collection of land revenue, whereby each patti came to have its own complement of service castes owing allegiance only to the land-holders of their own patti on whose lands they had built their houses. We have also noted earlier that though the members of these

272. Op.cit., p. 18.

273. Op.cit., pp. 27-28.

patti specific service castes were allowed to serve their clients of other patti, the sweepers and the chamars were not allowed to serve outside the patti. Further, the Matadar of each division of the village also stands in comparison with Patti lambardar, who together with their counterparts of other divisions or Bhags or Pattis administered the village jointly as headmen.

In spite of these structural similarities, it does not seem that a share-hold village of Gujarat went the “Jajmani” way of Upper India, which itself was a later and further development during the early British period, just simply because the village servants / Vasvaya were divided into Bhags or major divisions by dividing their service sphere in the village as a territorial whole. While the development of so called “Jajmani system” in Upper India, as we have seen, has been elaborately pointed out by P. Mayer²⁷⁴ there is no evidence of such a development in Gujarat where division specific servant families were employed by certain specific families on dyadic basis. Thus the division of village into major divisions and settlement of servants / Vasvaya by each division from the beginning, as pointed out by Fukazawa (second interpretation) is feasible, in which case it is necessary to remember again Fuller’s²⁷⁵ observation that because the distinction between demiurgic and Jajmani is ‘conceptual, “it is quite possible that there may be no absolute certainty to find out on the ground whether village servants are linked to the village as a whole or to individual patron households.” He further notes that “in contrast to Jajmani... the officials and servants are not clients of patron households, but are attached to the village as a whole or to a division of it and the remuneration which they received at harvest time from cultivators is made on behalf of the entire village or division.”²⁷⁶

We may now consider the third type of villages known as “Senja” or unshared ones, which constituted a majority, and were later during the British period settled as Raiyatwari villages. In this form of the village, the peasant families owned plots of land separately and paid the land revenue on them also separately. The headman Patel and the accountant Talathi of the village managed the affairs. The complement of Vasvaya were the servants of the village community employed

274. *Inventing Village Tradition: the late 19th century origins of north Indian Jajmani system*, op.cit., pp. 357-93.

275. *Misconceiving the grain heap – a critique of the concept of Indian Jajmani system*, op.cit., p. 38.

276. *Ibid.*, p. 36.

and maintained by it, in contra-distinction to these being servants of the individual cultivating families. The servants however humble they may be, were not bound to any family however highly placed and called them as their Jajmans, if only honorifically. They worked for every peasant and collected their fixed dues, mostly in grain, whether they were gifted any Pusseta land or not, from all, annually after harvest, irrespective of whether any peasant cultivator has availed of his services or not. Within the Vasvaya group there was reciprocal service system. This Vasvaya-Avat system was administered by the village headman on behalf of the village community.

6.8.4 Village Artisans and Servants –Vasvaya.

Below we will consider the types of artisans and servants comprising Vasvaya group of the village service system. Like in other regions, the Gujarat village too, had a hierarchy of stereotypical village servants in its establishment, which latter consisted of two categories viz. Those useful for village administration and those useful for village community termed as Vasvaya, the classes originally instituted by the village community on hereditary basis. All these Vasvaya group of artisans and servants were found existing from time immemorial, but they existed merely to serve the needs of the community. Hence it is that they were called as “servants of the village community” whose maintenance was guaranteed by the community on account of which they were not accustomed to migrate in search of better employment. The peculiarity of village occupations was that they were just what they were required to make village community self-contained and self-sufficient. An important feature of this “Demiurgic” employment was a fixed share of grain paid annually by each cultivator to all village-Vasvaya at the time of annual harvest. The payment was not made in cash, nor was the payment made in kind on each occasion the service was rendered, whether each cultivator required the services of Vasvaya or not. In the light of the above recapitulation, we will scan the lists of village artisans and servants as gleaned from different district and state gazetteers of Gujarat as also the generalized list of Gujarat given by Wilson presented in Table number 6.8.4(1). At the outset it is important to note that different types of Vasvaya were not even normatively fixed for the region, let alone for the village in its service system of the village as in the neighboring state of Maharashtra. Looking at the table while one fails to notice any significant difference in the lists, except the absence of some types and the presence of others between districts

Table No. 6.8.4. (1) Artisans and servants (Vasvayas) in old Gujarat Districts and states.

No.	Type.	Wilson's list of Gujarat.	Ahmedabad district.	Kaira and Panchamahals districts.	Baroda state.	Surat and Broach districts.	Kathiyawad district.	Kutch Palanpur Sabarkanta Etc.
1.	Carpenter.	Sutar.	Sutar.	Sutar.	Sutar.	Sutar.	Sutar.	Sutar.
2.	Blacksmith.	Luhar.	Luhar.	Luhar.	Luhar.	Luhar.	Luhar.	Luhar.
3.	Coppersmith.	-	-	-	-	-	-	Kansar.
4.	Potter.	Kumbhar.	Kumbhar.	Kumbhar.	Kumbhar.	Kumbhar.	Kumbhar.	Kumbhar.
5.	Tailor.	Darji.	Darji.	Darji.	Darji.	Darji.	Darji.	Darji.
6.	Washerman.	Dhobi.	-	-	Dhobi.	Dhobi.	Dhobi.	-
7.	Barber.	Hajam.	Hajam.	Hajam.	Hajam.	Hajam.	Valund.	Valund.
8.	Shoe maker.	Mochi.	Mochi and Chamadia.	-	-	Mochi.	Mochi.	Mochi.
9.	Leather dresser.	Khalpa.	-	-	-	Khalpa.	Khalpa.	-
10.	Tanner.	Dhed.	-	-	Dhed.	-	Dhed.	-
11.	Scavenger.	Bhangi.	Bhangi.	Bhangi.	Bhangi.	Bhangi.	Bhangi.	-
12.	Water drawer.	Kosia.	-	Kosia.	-	Kosia. *	-	-
13.	Water purveyor.	-	-	-	-	Parabio. *	-	-
14.	Goldsmith.	Sonar.	-	-	-	Soni.	Soni.	Soni.
15.	Singer and Genealogist.	Bhat \ Bharot.	-	-	Bhat.	Barot \ Bhat.	Bhat and Charan.	Charan.
16.	Muslim priest \ Teacher.	Akhun.	-	-	-	Akhun.	Kaji and Mulla.	-
17.	Hindu doctor.	Baid.	-	-	-	Vaid. *	-	-
18.	Astrologer.	Joshi.	-	-	-	Joshi. *	-	-

No.	Type.	Wilson's list of Gujarat.	Ahmedabad district.	Kaira and Panchamahals districts.	Baroda state.	Surat and Broach districts.	Kathiyawad district.	Kutch Palanpur Sabarkanta Etc.
19.	Religious Mendicant.	Gosavi.	Jogi \ Raval.	-	-	Gosain \ Vairagi.	-	-
20.	Muslim Mendicant.	Fakir.	-	-	-	-	-	-
21.	Brahmin village priest.	-	Gor. ¹	Gamot ² \ Bhatt.	Gamot.	Gamot.	Gor and Vyas ³ .	-
22.	Temple priests.	-	-	-	-	Pujari.	-	-
23.	Strolling Players.	-	-	-	-	Bhavayyas.	-	Bhavayyas.

* Listed as special servants.

1. Gor is Upadhyaya or Panda.
2. Gamot \ Gamaru is village Upadhyaya.

Source : Bombay Gazetteers, Ahmedabad District, vol. IV, 1879; Kaira and Panchmahals, vol. III, 1879; Baroda, vol. VII, 1883; Surat and Broach, vol. II, 1877; Kathiyawad, vol. VIII, 1884; Kutch, Palanpur and Mahikanta etc., vol.

vis-à-vis Wilson's list. One also fails to understand why Wilson's list does not contain the priest – Gamot or Gor, but lists only the astrologer Joshi. Between districts Joshi figures only in Surat and Broach lists along with Gamot (village Upadhyaya) listed as a special servant while the list for Kutch does not enumerate any. Perhaps for Wilson the priest (Purohit) might not have been an essential element of the service system, as he does not seem to have been appointed by the village community like other Vasvaya; while the Joshi was. The sphere of service for ritual priest (purohit) was based on caste as endogamous group, in particular it tended to be confined to certain specific caste or castes on specific family basis and was a classical dyadic Jajmani relationship. While Rajput or the allied higher caste individual was the best person for whom a Brahman might officiate as a purohit or a family priest, in respect of other communities such as Kolis, Kanabis and Patidars who dominate rural Gujarat, the Brahman's primary importance is as a marriage priest. But no generalization is possible about the particular Brahman who performed the marriages and other rituals of these and other lower castes. There were some classes of "degraded Brahmans" such as Mochi Gor, Kanabi Gor, Gujar Gor etc. who performed as ritual priests of these specific communities.

The lists of Ahmedabad, Kaira and Panchmahal districts as also Kutch, do not contain the personal servant Dhobi or Washerman. While the reason for absence in the district level data is not known, Dhobi was not found in all villages, even in districts he was enumerated, nor does there appear any caste-determined need for his services. As Pocock D.F.²⁷⁷ has noted, "the Dhobi population of Gujarat appears never to have been large and today it is very much a town or a city caste." Even so, the absence of Dhobi in the district level data casts suspicion on the reliability of Gazetteer data. Similar is the omission of Mochi and Chamadia in the lists of Kaira, Panchmahal and Baroda. However the Baroda list has Dheds, the tanner. While normally Dheds did sweeping and scavenging, they also did skinning and tanning of dead animals. Even so, our suspicion about the reliability of Gazetteer data increases when we check the above with the Baroda census of 1891, where we find Mochis and Khalpas enumerated.

From the above table we find the following as a common set of Vasvaya, essential for the village service system embedded in the village establishment.

277. Kanbi and Patidar: A study of Patidar community of Gujarat, Oxford University Press, Oxford, 1972, pp.31-32.

Artisans.	Personal servants.	Village servants.
1. Sutar.	5. Hajam / Valand.	7. Dhed. (Sweeper).
2. Lohar.	6. Darji. (Tailor).	8. Bhangi. (Scavenger)
3. Kumbhar.		
4. Mochi /Chamar/Khalpa.		

The rest may be considered as peripheral whether resident or non-resident in the village.

Considering the nature of remuneration paid to Vasvaya we notice the following variation in the district level Gazetteer data as tabulated in Table number 6.8.4. (2). For Kutch and Saurashtra we could not get similar data though remuneration was mostly given as grain share, the assignment of rent free land could not be listed by Vasvaya type.

Earlier we noted “waveyly pusseata” or rent free land given to Vasvaya to tie them to the village and render service to the village community. We also pointed out that this was supplemented by grain and / or cash payments and other perquisites. But it was not that every Vasvaya in the complement was endowed with pusseata land. Analyzing the table we find that between districts about 45 to 70 percent of Vasvaya held pusseta land. The highest 70 percent came from Baroda while the lowest 45 percent came from Surat and Broach districts. Similarly those who received fixed grain payments with or without land and with or without cash varied between 63 percent in Surat and Broach and to hundred percent in Ahmedabad districts. As regards cash payment, the variation in Vasvaya getting remuneration or as perquisites varied from a minimum of 20% in Surat and Broach to a maximum of 72% in Kaira and Panchmahal Districts. While no obvious explanation can be given to the above noted variation, it is predominantly the nature of the economy and the customary practices that seem to account for it.

The above district level data confound the village level variation within the district and the set of Vasvaya of the system noticed earlier may not all be found in each and every village, as the socio-economic development of the village varied even in a relatively homogeneous tract. The existence of a given type of Vasvaya depends upon a number of factors in the village, like the nature of the village economy, the caste composition, the occupational structure and the customary habit of the villagers. While the universality of the carpenter, the blacksmith, and

Table no. 6.8.4. (2). Remuneration to Vasvaya.

----- Mode of payment to Vasvaya -----						
Only land without quit rent.	Only grain.	Only cash.	Land and grain.	Land and cash.	Grain and cash.	Land grain and cash.
Unspecified.						
Ahmedabad district						
			Mochi \ Chamara.		Darji.	Sutar.
						Bhangis.
						Jogi \ Raval.
						Kumbhar.
						Hajam.
						Gamot.
Kaira and Panchmahals						
			Luhar.	Bhangis.	Kosio.	
			Kumbhar.	Dhed.	Gamot.	
			Hajam.		Sutar.	
					Darji.	
Baroda.						
Bhangis.	Dhobi.	Darji.		Hajam.		Sutar.
	Dhed.					Luhar.
						Kumbhar.
						Gamot.
Surat and Broach.						
Mochi.	Darji.	Soni.	Kumbhar.			Gosain \ Bairagi.
Joshi.	Dhed.		Dhobi.			Sutar.
Vaid.	Kosio.		Hajam.			Luhar.
Akhun.	Parabio.		Khalpa.			
Barot \ Bhat.			Bhangis.			
Pujari.						

the tanner in most villages is due to their close connection with the agricultural economy, crafts like pottery, tailoring etc. depend upon the living and wearing habits of the people in the village. Further, just as the number of Vasvaya varied from village to village according to opportunities for work, so also did the relationship between them and other castes within the general frame of the village service system. While there were running relationships, there were relationships of more casual nature for the serving families of Vasvaya.

While we do not have village-wise data of the 19th century vintage, we have a couple of village studies all belonging to the later period. But by then the old village community had undergone radical change and its closed economy disintegrated. As the 1921 census²⁷⁸ observed, "the complete equipment of artisans and menials with which the old type of village was furnished is being dissolved by the force of competitive tendencies. As village becomes larger the village barber, blacksmith, carpenter or potter seems to lose the definiteness of his clientele. The influence of custom in fixing the remuneration for hire of labor is also giving way gradually to the laws of supply and demand. In many important directions the village services were depleted by the discontented village artisan or menial leaving for towns or large centers in the hope that with better wages and newer surroundings his ambitions can be satisfied." In view of this the data of the later village studies do not stand comparison, when the village service system is fragmented and transformed.

With the old village community in which the community maintained Vasvaya system operated, having disintegrated, and the caste-occupation linkage having got loosened and with the penetration of commercial economy into the village leading to the breakup of village handicrafts, it is possible that individualized dyadic relations of the so called Jajmani type might have replaced the earlier demiurgic ones. To this state of affairs the policy of the colonial government is also responsible in no small measure. However on this transformation to individualized dyadic relations, we do not have any recorded study though the catchy term "Jajmani" is indiscriminately used.

278. Vol. XVII, Part I, p. 358.

6.9.0 Village Service System in South India

At the close of the 18th century or so, many points of similarity can be found between the North and the South India. As regards the agrarian relationships in the south, the Zamindar, the Inamdar were the familiar features of the scene as also the agriculturists with hereditary superior rights in the land (mirasdar) and tenants holding lands from all three groups on the basis of a variety of arrangements. However, significant differences could be noticed, not merely with regard to specific agrarian institutions not to be found in the north, but also in the entire character of the agrarian economy in the south. But at the level of rights in the land, the purely economic aspects of proprietorship, especially right of sale, transfer and mortgage, dependent on the growth of a land market, were fully articulated in the north. On the other hand, "the agrarian structure in the south appears to have been closely tied up with social institutions in general and caste in particular."²⁷⁹

Village community in India, as emphasized by us all along, was characterized by the possession of a number of permanent officials and artisans belonging to different castes each having a definite status in the economic and civic life, embedded in its structure. As Ghurye²⁸⁰ noted, "in India, south of the Vindhya, the system was very highly developed, and the number of such dignitaries varied from 12 to 24, belonging to as many different castes. These persons irrespective of their caste-status, had not only a voice in the civic affairs but were also sometimes consulted in purely social and legal matters affecting the private lives of the individuals of any caste resident in the village. In Northern India, the system of village servants, though not so highly evolved as in the South, yet served the purpose of harmonizing different groups, till the super-imposition of the dominant caste had lessened the importance of the village dignitaries. These latter, because of the particular form of land tenure and revenue system and their almost servile tenure, had no status in the civic affairs of the members of the dominant caste. In its pristine glory, however, a village or a town had a council of elders chosen from all castes and representing all avocations in the locality."

In the south also, the relation between the agriculture and the caste-based professional crafts and services had taken the pan-Indian form of community

279. Cambridge Economic History, op.cit., Vol. 2, pp. 15-16.

280. Caste and Race in India. Popular Prakashan, Bombay, 1932, reprint 1994, p. 23.

maintained village service system. This meant that the requirements of the village community in certain goods and services were met by a staff of professionals who were remunerated not with payment for work done, but summarily with a fraction of gross agricultural produce (ayam, merah, arthayam) and or with a piece of land (manyam, inam, bhuyam) ²⁸¹ free from taxes or reduced tax. These artisans and servants were servants of the village community as a corporate body. As a rule, socially, they were ranked lower than landholders. The fulfillment of their obligations as well as their maintenance collectively were considered as social duties.

Within such a system functioned a section of blacksmiths, carpenters, potters, goldsmiths, tanners, washermen, barbers etc. They were found spread over the villages in definite proportions –one professional was sometimes attached to several villages –and tied to the whole set of economic and social relations to the village or locality and the limited requirements of its population.

The community maintained village service system known as Ayagar system, variously called as Kanachigars, Panimakal / Paniwallus, or gramaparikara, which is widespread in Karnataka and Mysore, Tamilnadu and Andhra pradesh, was found functioning at least up to the British conquest. While it is not clear if this system prevailed in Kerala, with its particular village system but historians have noted that blacksmiths, carpenters and goldsmiths were paid not only in kind but in cash also, which might be an evidence of deterioration of the system of collective maintenance of artisans at that period.²⁸² but upto the end of the 19th century, one sees, in Malabar the settlement of these and other artisans in the villages; the service lands of the village servants; the dues in kind to the astrologer, the carpenter, the goldsmith, the musician, the midwife, the barber; and the idea of a monopoly of an artisan on service for the population of a village.²⁸³

A salient feature of the system was that all artisans and servants together with the village administrative staff were known, in the entire south by the common appellation as Ayagaras, which in later literature comes to be reckoned as “village-12” or “village-establishment”. These ayagaras in some situations appeared as a

281. Sastri K. A. N. and Venkataramanayya N., further sources of Vijayanagara history, Madras, 1946, Vol. 3, p. 310.

282. Chicherov, India, Economic Development in the 16th – 18th centuries, op.cit. p. 18, 25, 75 etc.

283. Cambridge Economic History, op.cit.. Vol. 1, p. 316.

kind of council of representatives of all castes living in a village. In this role of ayagaras might be a collective witness to transfer of land 'election' of the headman and so on. Even so in the ritual hierarchy, the village artisans and servants comprised in the body of ayagaras, belonged to castes lower than that of landholders or mirasdars. Their social inequality was illustrated by their residential location in the village. This social disparity was often compounded with their economic "exploitation". A number of lower castes of ayagaras worked in the fields of community land- holders (mirasdars) in Tamilnadu without remuneration.

The system of inter-community unity of crafts and services and agriculture came to acquire a sufficient flexibility to survive for a long time. The caste, uniting artisans and similar occupational services over vast regions was an active social institution, like the earlier guilds. In case of the appreciable disproportion between local demand and supply for a certain service, the corresponding caste council could redistribute their members over the region to meet the demand. The flexibility of the system also meant that the artisans working under the system were not totally cut off from the market. As and when the latter developed, they might sell outside their village their surplus produce of goods and services after meeting their communal obligations to the village. It may be noted here that, in the community maintained system of ayagaras, only those kind of work of the community which were directly complementary to the agricultural production were included. But goods for personal consumption were produced by the same artisans for separate piece-rate payment. "It is possible" as Aliev²⁸⁴ observes, "that in the south, the economic relations between the ayagaras and the landholders combined the features of the natural and commodity production."

Writing about the southern village service systems in the context of jajmani, Peter Mayer²⁸⁵ underscores the fact that, in contrast to so called jajmani system of North India, "what emerges from the colonial south Indian revenue records of the early 19th century is the clear evidence that 'village servants' were just the servants of the village, which was... frequently held in common by the dominant land owning caste. Their tenure as village servants was denoted by the same term (kaniachi or later Mirasi) which applied to the property rights of the village landowners. Their share in lieu of payment was taken from the entire harvest as were payments due to temples or the state." Commenting on the distinctive nature

284. *The Cambridge Economic History of India*, op.cit., Vol. 1, p. 317.

285. *Inventing Village Tradition – etc.*, 1993, op.cit., p. 363.

of the south Indian village service tenure, Gough K.²⁸⁶ in her review article on Beidelman's book refers to Mirasi relations. She notes that, "many of the castes which the author would term as Kamins, i.e. village servants, had hereditary right not only in the share of the general produce in the village but also to specific plots of land... by hereditary right (maniyam) held not from village landlord but from the Raja or the king. Some village servant families retain such plots as their private (capitalist) property today. In the Mirasi regions of Tanjore, village servants 'owned' specific fractions of the village harvest rather than special plots. In the Maharatta period, they were paid by the dominant landlord caste on the open threshing floor in the presence of the king's revenue officer, who was responsible for maintaining the law governing the division of shares of grain."

More than a century after, Ellis²⁸⁷ noted that the emoluments of all "official Mirasi" consisted of a certain extent of Manyam or rent free land and of a 'merei' or 'fixed percentage of all produce of varpet land under cultivation', Benson J.²⁸⁸ reporting on the Paniwallu system that he found in Mallannapalle village in Andhra Pradesh, noted that, "service caste households had a right to exclusive service of a village. This work-right was, and continues to be, inherited and divided in the same way as other property. It could be sold or given to non-relatives." A similar study to find jajmani parallels between paniwallu system and the former, of another A.P. village Bronger D.²⁸⁹ finds important distinctions and comes to the generalized conclusion that, "investigations undertaken so far do not justify the often propounded view that jajmani system is proved to be the general characteristic of Indian agrarian society in the whole subcontinent."

With this general pre-view, we consider below the south Indian village service systems, generally labeled as "Ayagar system" in different regions of south India. Earlier in chapter 5 we have given a generalized description of the said system as a community maintained demiurgic system as delineated by Appadorai, based on the inscriptional literature to compare and contrast it with jajmani system. We have also noted the historical fact that during the vijayanagara period the Ayagara

286. The Hindu Jajmani System, Economic Development and Cultural Change, Vol. IX, no. 1, Oct. 1960, p. 87.

287. Bayley and Huddleston (Eds), Papers on Mirasi Right, Pharoah and Co., Madras 1862, p. 180.

288. A South Indian Jajmani System, Ethnology, Vol. XV, no. 3, 1976, p. 242.

289. Jajmani System in Southern India, Journal of Indian Anthropological Society, Vol. 10, 1975, p. 34.

system reorganized as such in Karnataka was extended to Andhra Pradesh and Tamilnadu. In the following sections we will describe the system, regionwise together with the regional background of each.

6.9.1 The Ayagar system of Karnataka

6.9.1(a) villages and village communities:

The Karnataka state as constituted today, comprises four southern districts of Ex-Bombay presidency namely Belgaum, Bijapur, Dharwad and Karwar or North Canara; adjoining districts of ex-Hyderabad state namely Gulbarga, Bidar and Raichur districts; two districts from ex-Madras Presidency namely Bellary and South Canara and the entire state of Mysore and Coorg. These groups of districts were under different political administrations before the reorganization of the state –(1956). The state has been broadly divided into the northern plain / maidan / Bayalu seeme, the southern maidan and the western Malnad region.

In spite of the political and administrative regimes from which the different areas from the state have been grouped together, the basic socio-economic constitution of the villages has been the same, uniform all-India pattern, with peripheral regional differences. In the plains of the southern and northern maidans of the state the villages are generally nucleated. The village site is centrally situated, surrounded by the cultivated and the wastelands. A separate portion of the village site is generally set apart for the depressed classes. Such villages are found with or without hamlets attached to them. In the coastal districts we have an absence of villages in the usual sense of the term. The villages are often such only in name being composed of single homesteads dispersed in a scattered linear pattern along the valley sides among orchard trees or coffee plantations. In the North Canara district, only as we approach the neighbouring districts of Belgaum and Dharwad and above the western ghat and the Sahyadri hills we find formation of villages. In the two coastal districts the houses of the cultivators stand separately in the neighbourhood of the fields held by them.

In most districts of the former Mysore state, smaller villages with less than 500 population contributed a quarter or a third of the rural population of the district. In the remaining districts of Karnataka, however, the medium and the large sized villages formed a substantial portion of the rural population of the districts. In the southern Maidan region the villages having smaller population were more numerous than those having larger population. But it was found to be the other way about

the districts of the northern Maidan.

Considering the internal organization of villages as village communities, besides the usual set of village administrative officers, each village, modeled on pan-Indian constitution, constituted a production unit, whose chief feature as in the case of most villages elsewhere in the country, was its self-sufficiency and independence to a large extent, from relations with the outside world. Its internal economy possessed within its boundaries, factors that were requisite to meet the few wants of the great bulk of its people, who were mostly agriculturists. The cultivators had leased in plots of land for cultivation either directly from the government or from the landlords to whom they paid rent, working themselves with the aid of their family labor and sometimes with hired servants and with a small capital from their savings or otherwise borrowed from the village landlord or money lender.

Besides these two classes of cultivators, there was a third class of inhabitants composed of the artisans, the weaver, the oil presser, and the goldsmith, who met the needs of the village community. The potter, besides the servants like the barber and the washerman was the other artisan in the village along with the carpenter and the blacksmith. However, the latter two were directly auxiliary to agriculture. While these and still others, all belonged to different occupational castes, their services, as in other parts of the country were mainly paid in kind at the annual harvest and the petty shopkeeper performed the function of exchanging the different products. The moneylender who usually combined the function of grain merchant was an important member by virtue of his position in the village community. Though not members of the village community, there were itinerant traders, skilled artisans and entertainers etc., who visited the village during a definite season every year and met the requirements of the villagers.

In the village economy there was very little competition with the outside world, though within the village the motive of self-interest prompted everybody to find the best advantage for himself. Internal competition between professional castes was avoided by customary arrangements. Wages and profits were to a large extent governed by custom and were comparatively fixed and inelastic. Division of labour was carried to some extent, but as the division depended on the extent of the market it could not be stretched very far and what capital there was, was locked up in the land. In short, the village system compelled production on a large scale and deepened the effect of custom. Coined money was rarely used, grain being

used for exchange instead. The different classes in the village were conscious that each was dependent on others and the interests of each class were bound up with those of the rest. This interdependence held the village community together.

Such village communities with their traditional self-governing institutions were a legacy of the past, right from the mediaeval period of Karnataka history till changes crept in during the colonial regime.

6.9.1(b) System of Land Management:

The system of land management conquest in Bombay Karnatak was Raiyatwari, which was introduced by the colonial regime. Previously Marathas had the revenue farming system under which districts were let out to the highest bidder and by them again underlet to the other rentiers. Both the land and the raiyat suffered under this system. There was no Miras in the southern Maratha country. The Mirasdars from the Bombay Deccan (Western Maharashtra) were the permanent or hereditary holders. But in Karnatak, as elsewhere in the country, a right of occupancy was there so long as the government dues were paid.

Under the Maratha rule in southern Maratha country, there were four tenure categories of land, viz.²⁹⁰;

- (1) Challee: land, which from long occupancy was most improved and its rent was calculated upon a standard rate,
- (2) Katta Guttige: land, which paid the standard rate and accustomed a cess,
- (3) Khandamakta: land, which was let on a low fixed rate according to previous engagement with the holder,
- (4) Cowl: lands, which were allowed to raiyats on lighter terms.

The levy of extra cess or Pattis, which was the curse of the Maratha system, had raised the assessment on Challee lands to a rate it could hardly bear. However, to enable the raiyat to put up with it, he was allowed to hold portions of other categories of lands. He could also cultivate Inam land on favorable rates. Choksey likens the Challee landholder to Mirasdars of Maharashtra in the rights and position they enjoyed in the village. "Like the Mirasdars, the Challee raiyats were permanent residents of the village and had a voice in the management". Temporary residents

290. Choksey R. D., *Economic Life in the Bombay Karnatak (1818 – 1939)*, Asia Publishing House, Bombay, 1963, pp. 12-13.

or cultivators could not hold Challee lands and were not allowed to interfere with the management of village affairs.

At an earlier time, all land paid a standard rate. But as already noted, with the addition of cesses and pattis which increased from time to time, the land could no longer be retained in cultivation. Therefore, in order to enable raiyats to pay assessment, favourable terms under the above new tenure categories were introduced. While the above tenures give a favourable view of land management under the Marathas, the later introduction of revenue farming system “ reduced land management to speculation disregarding all tenures and rights. It was found that the patels and hereditary heads of the villages were displaced by persons agreeing to pay higher revenue; and cesses upon cesses of the most arbitrary nature were collected until the original field assessment was entirely obliterated”.

The major parts of both Mysore and Hyderabad²⁹¹ were essentially raiyatwari, comprising peasant proprietors in severalty villages. But in both these states the weakening of state power in the early part of the 19th century led to the spread of revenue farming and hence to inefficiency, corruption and extortion from the cultivators. But this tendency was short lived for the revenue farmers to claim landlord rights as in north India.

In Hyderabad state, three districts of which were later transferred to Karnataka, about half the territory consisted of Khalsa or Diwani lands directly managed by the state and the royal demesne on which revenue went direct to Nizam’s privy purse but which was otherwise managed on raiyatwari lines. The rates of land revenue on the remaining raiyatwari lands were in theory, one-half of the produce on dry lands, one-third or two-fifths on land irrigated by wells, and one-fourth for valuable crops like sugarcane or on dry lands. Over one- third of the land was held by the members of the nobility like former Hindu rulers, chieftains or nobles who were assigned Jagir estates for military and other services to the state or former revenue officials like Zamindars, Deshmukhs or Inamdars. These nobles not only collected their revenue but also had police and judicial authority in their states. They also held hereditary offices at the court. As a result of mismanagement and embezzlement, the state was found constantly running in debt. The land revenue was farmed out to moneylenders and to Arab and Pathan soldiers who extorted as much as they could from the peasantry. The state was in near financial collapse

291. The following account is based on Dharma Kumar, *Cambridge Economic History of India*, op.cit. Vol. 2, pp. 224 – 226.

in the middle of the 19th century till it was rescued by the abolition of revenue farming, and giving officials salaries through the establishment of government treasury.

In the Mysore State also, the customary rates of revenue were, in general, one-half of the crop on irrigated lands and one-third on dry, with variations in different parts of the state. The land revenue on irrigated lands was collected in kind and it was expressed as a share of the crop. Most of the land was under the “Kandayam system”, where money rates were fixed per acre. In the Mysore state also there were extensive Inam lands, though there were no Jagirdars or large estate holders. There were also systems of low rates to encourage cultivation like the Istawa system in Maharashtra. The right to cultivate was heritable, but in theory the raiyat could not transfer his land without the permission of the government and if he failed to pay the land revenue, the land reverted to the government. These principles did not apply to the garden lands where considerable investment was required. In areas where land was fertile and land revenue moderate there emerged, in practice, rights of ownership in land.

While there was no drastic change in the above structure, after the restoration of the Wodeyars in 1799 AD, the old system of direct revenue collection by the government officials was followed instead of revenue farming, though in some parts revenue farming continued. Soldiers were given waste lands in lieu of half their pay. On dry lands a fixed money rate was levied at the estimated value of one-third of the crop. On wet lands it was one-half of the crop nominally collected in kind, but was converted into a money rate upon agreement between cultivators and the state officials. On Kandyam lands paying fixed money rates the land revenue was estimated to have amounted, on an average, to between 30 to 40 percent of the gross produce.

The above system in its essentials, with efforts to convert kind rates into money rates continued till the so-called Regulation period of 1863-81 AD. During this period the Inam and raiyatwari lands were surveyed and settled. While the Inam settlement followed the Madras pattern, the Raiyatwari settlement followed the Bombay pattern. In the Bombay system there was no attempt to assess the gross or net produce per acre as in Madras, the survey officer took into account the rates that had actually prevailed in previous 30 years or more, changes in cultivation, irrigation etc. and then determined the revenue on pragmatic grounds. This method generally resulted in lighter rates than in Madras.

6.9.1. (c) The Ayagar System:

During the pre-Vijayanagara times in Karnataka, Entu Hittu²⁹² was a corporate body of the village executives comprising 3 village officers, namely the Gauda (headman), Senabova (accountant), Talara (watchman, police) and five representatives of Pancha Karuka (artisan classes) namely, Badagi (carpenter), Kammara (blacksmith), Agasa (washerman), Navaliga (barber), and Akkasale (goldsmith). In the riverside villages Ambiga or Ketabova (boatman) and in the non-riverside villages Kumbhara (potter) or Kanchagara (metal worker) were properly included. These were chosen initially or at the foundation of the village as an elder member of the profession and subsequently continued hereditarily in his line. When so chosen, the individual did not engage himself in the work of his profession but did only the work of village welfare, while other members of his profession worked as village artisans and earned their livelihood.

Dixit²⁹³ refers to the view of Dr.Fleet that, “Entu Hittu might mean eight guilds and notes that Fleet’s view appears to be very near the mark, but it surely was a single corporate body and its functions were as follows:

- (1) to grant village land for public works such as temples and tanks and to individuals such as those who fought for the protection of the village;
- (2) to participate and stand as witness to grants / gifts made by villagers to temples and for the maintenance of tanks etc. in the village and to execute and protect them, as it was customary to pay gifts etc. in their presence;

292. Entu Hittu: While the primary meaning of Hittu is “flour”, secondarily it stands for food or food grains which is the mainstay for living. These professionals use to receive food grains in return for their services for maintenance. Over the time, the term Hittu acquired different shades of meaning. In our context, Hittu means a profession. The Entu Hittu of the inscriptions means the representatives of eight professions. In some inscriptions the Hittu are twelve, “Hanni Hittu”. The meaning of the term Hittu did not remain confined to an occupation or profession for livelihood, but it came to stand for an organization of skilled artisans of which a particular Hittukara was a member or leader of the particular profession in the village. There are also references to “Pittukaras” which may mean the holders of Pittu / Hittu or Vritti (Birt of North India) or Inam Lands.

See Kittel, Kannada – English dictionary, 1971, Vol. 4, S. V. Hittu, p. 1733; Kannada Nighantu, Kannada Sahitya Parishad, Bangalore, 1995, Vol. 6, S. V. Pittu, p. 5606, S. V. Pittukara, p. 5606 and Dixit G. S. Local self-government in Karnataka, University of Karnataka, Dharwad, 1964, p. 60 and Gurav R. N. “Entu Hittu, Bara Balute”, Janapada Sahitya Darshan, Vol. 7, pp. 71-85.

293. Dixit G. S., Local Self-Government in Karnatak, University of Karnatak, Dharwad, 1964, p. 60.

- (3) to grant the necessary permission for any construction of temple, tank etc. in the village;
- (4) to stand as witness at the investiture of Goudike or headmanship;
- (5) to generally attend to the welfare of the village. While these and others were the duties, collective responsibility and the status in the society of the Entu Hittu body, it should be noted that the body was not Gram Panchayat or was it the executive body of it. It should be further noted that “Hanni Hittu”, whose list was not available, is not an enlarged version of ‘Enttu Hittu’ nor is the latter the contracted form of the former. It seems that it was this ancient body, which served as a proto-type for later version of “Ayagar system”, but it is not known exactly when the term “Hittu” was replaced by “Aya”, though this change and reorganization is commonly ascribed to the Vijayanagara period (1350-1564AD). While during the said period, according to Burton Stein,²⁹⁴ locality institutions in Karnataka were altered by the centralized government, “the Ayagara system of the ancient Karnataka not only continued to exist there, but also throughout the macro region” of south India. This system was the counterpart of what is called in the later 19th century literature as “village establishment.”

While writing about the Ayagar system, most historians have quoted the well known passage from Col. Wilks²⁹⁵ who for several years was the Political Resident at the court of Mysore, which has become as popular as that of Metcalf. Rice²⁹⁶ has also quoted him in his description of the Ayagar system in Mysore. The following is the historical passage, which was an important source for Marx’s²⁹⁷ writing on Indian villages: “Every Indian village is, and appears always to have been, in fact, a separate community or republic; the Gauda or Potail is the judge and the magistrate; the Karanam or Shanbhog is the registrar. The Taliyari or Sthulwar and the Toti are generally the watchmen of the village and of crops; the Neerganti distributes the water of streams or reservoirs in just proportions to

294. Cambridge Economic History, op.cit., Vol. 1, p. 109.

295. Historical Sketches of Mysore, Higgin Bothams, Madras 1810 – 1817, Vol. 1, pp. 73-74; see also Firminger, Fifth Report, Madras p. 13 for a description of the working of the Ayagar system.

296. Mysore and Coorg Gazetteer, Bangalore, 1877, p. 464ff.

297. Fuller C. J., Misconceiving the Grain Heap, op.cit., p. 58, fn3.

several fields; the Jyotishee, Joshi or Astrologer performs the essential service of announcing the seasons of seedtime and harvest, and the imaginary benefit of unfolding the 'lucky or unlucky' days and hours for all the operations of farming; the Smith and Carpenter frame the rude instruments of husbandry, and the ruder dwelling of the farmer; the Potter fabricates the only utensils of the village; the Washerman keeps clean the few garments which are spun and sometimes woven in the family of the farmer, or purchased at the nearest market; the Barber contributes to cleanliness; the Goldsmith²⁹⁸ marking the approach of luxury, manufacture the simple ornaments with which they like to bedeck their wives or daughters; and these twelve officers styled the Bara-Bulowuttee or Ayangadi, as requisite members of the community, received compensation of their labor either in allotments of land from corporate stock or in fees consisting of the fixed proportions of the crop of every farmer in the village."

Besides the enumeration of 'village-12' what is interesting in the above passage is the identification of Ayagar system with that of Bara-Baluti of the Marathi speaking country. Grant Duff's²⁹⁹ account of the Maharashtrian village structure is almost contemporaneous with those of Munro and Wilks. Col. Munro's Report on Anantpur (Andhra pradesh) is only four years before Wilk's, while Coat's³⁰⁰ study of Lonikand, a village near Pune is dated 1819 and Goodine's³⁰¹ Report is dated in the year 1852. There seems to be a commingling of information with a view to find commonalties rather than differences by almost every British Indian administrator. While this may partially explain the identification of the Ayagar system with Bara-Baluti despite language difference, the history of the journey of the Bara-Baluti terminology not only in Kannada speaking area but also in Tamilnadu in Mclean's Manual³⁰² may perhaps be due to the influence of Maratha Power as deep south as Tanjore. But interestingly in the Vidarbha – Nagpur region of Maharashtra, instead of calling the village servants as Balutedars, they are called

298. "In some parts of the country the goldsmith is not found included in the enumeration of the twelve, his place being occupied by the poet... who frequently fills also the office of school master", Rice, op.cit.

299. A History of the Marathas, Vol. 1 (ed. 1912), pp. 24-25.

300. Account of the present state of the township of Lony, Transactions of the literary society of Bombay, Vol. 3, 1823, pp. 172-280.

301. Report on the village communities, Bombay Education Society's press, 1852.

302. Standing information regarding the Official Administration of Madras Presidency, Government press Madras, 1877, p.144.

as 'Ayakari'³⁰³.

To continue with Rice's account of the Ayagar system, these village servants were generally appointed by the government. The ruler could give the office of Gaudike or headmanship to any person of his choice. While the office was given either by the ruler or by his officers or by his village community it was to a person who had distinguished himself in public service. If the appointment was not made by the government, it had to be confirmed by the government, as the headman functioned as an agent of the government besides being the representative of the village community. Similar was the case of Shanbhoga and others of the village- twelve. Once appointed, these Ayagars had a hereditary right over their offices, and whenever a dispute arose as to who had the right to the particular office, the government took great care to find out to whom it belonged by custom and long usage and decided such cases.

As noted by Rice³⁰⁴ and also by Mahalingam³⁰⁵ the Ayagars had the right to sell or mortgage their offices when in distress. Since these offices were salable, they could be purchased. The Ayagars were granted tax-free lands (Maniyams or Inams) which they could enjoy in perpetuity for their service. Generally their number was 12, but this did not mean that every village community had the full complement of these Ayagars. Exigencies of work, the economy of the village as also the population size of the village community determined their number. In some villages the duties and functions of more than one servant were united in the same person for e.g. Shanbhoga's office was combined with that of Joisa who also acted as Purohita, and the same person operated in more than one village, for e.g. the potter. In some others again the number of the complement was much extended, say by the inclusion of school teacher. In cases where there were more claimants for a given office of Ayagar as for instance in the undivided Hindu family, they were allowed to select among themselves the individual whom they considered the fittest for the post and it was his name alone which appeared in the government accounts. In some instances they preferred to exercise their duties in rotation and when this was found to work harmoniously the authorities never interfered. The

303. Karve I., Maharashtra Land and People, Gazetteer of Maharashtra state, Bombay, 1968, p.140. also Central Provinces District Gazetteers Vol. VA, Bhandara District, (Ed. R. V. Russel), p. 114.

304. Mysore and Coorg Gazetteer, op.cit., Vol. 1, p. 581.

305. Administration and Social Life under Vijayanagara op.cit. p. 219.

Ayagaras as an executive body had onerous responsibilities with the village. They were the guardians of peace within the village. No transfer of property could be effected without the knowledge and consent of these functionaries. Sales of land in the village had to be made only with the knowledge of these officers and invariably the accountant Shanbhoga was the writer of the sale deeds.

In the following table no. 6.9.1 (c 1) we have presented different types of Ayagaras comprised in the system, as listed by different authorities. Despite the marginal differences in the listings we find the following 12 as the core Ayagaras.

1.Gauda 2.Shanbhoga 3. Talwara 4.Nirganti 5.sometimes Toti 6. Joisa 7.Badagi 8. Kammara 9.Kumbara 10. Akasale 11. Nayinda 12. Agasa. In the above listings the leather worker figures only in two of the six listings. As regards their remuneration for the services to the village community, besides the tax-free land, the raiyats gave them a share called “Nijayam” and “Ardhayam” of the crop produced in their village. These were fixed on the basis of each Kapila (leathern bucket for water lift), each Madi or seeded bed, each Kandi (Khandi or candy which varied in different regions in terms of mounds) or each putti (Butti= basket) according to regulations established anciently in different Parganas. Rice further notes that the Nijayam above the ghats was four seers of grain and Ardhayam was two seers. The government fixed the allowances or Ayam of the Ayagars at the time of annual settlement and they depended on the financial or revenue branch of the government. As noted earlier, Manyams or privileged lands were allowed to Ayagars for which they paid Jodi, a small tax from which none of these hereditary lands were exempted except the Joisa or Panchangi. The Shanbhoga also had to pay Jodi to the government.

The Gauda and Shanbhoga received full Ayam. Their duty was to see that the farmers cultivated the land and paid the Kandayam or rent fixed at the annual settlement. The public duties of Kammara and Badagi was to make and mend the agricultural implements without taking any price for the same as they received the Ayam, “Horehullu” ‘bundle of grass’ and “Mura batta”³⁰⁶ (“some portion of grain assigned”). Similarly the Agasa and Nayinda had to wash and shave gratis respectively for all raiyats of the village. The latter also dressed wounds and performed surgical operations. Beside Ayam they received ‘Horehullu’ and ‘Mura batta’. When the Agasa delivered clothes after washing he was given provision

306. We have not been able to understand the exact meaning of the term “Mura Batta” as the dictionaries have not given the term.

Table 6.9.1. (C1): Ayagars of Karnataka (Mysore).

Sr. No.	Village servant.	E.c. Sr. 119 1720 AD.	Wilks 1810 AD.	A. M. R. F. mid 19 th Century.	Wilson 1855 AD.	S. R. M. C. O. 1864.	Rice 1877 AD.
1.	Headman.	-	Ganda / Potail.	Ganda.	Ganda.	Patel.	Ganda.
2.	Accountant.	Shanbhaga.	Curnam / Shanbhaga.	Shanbhaga.	Shanbhaga.	Shanbhaga.	Shanbhaga.
3.	Village police / Kotwal.	Talawara.	Taliary / Sthulwar.	Talawara.	Talawara.	Talawara.	Talari.
4.	Water purveyor.	-	Neergantee.	Kere Neer ganti.	Nirganti / Kolawara.	Nirgunti.	Nirganti.
5.	Watchman.	-	Toti.	Toti.	-	Toti.	-
6.	Messenger Village watchman.	-	-	-	Barika.	-	-
7.	Astrologer.	Jois.	Jyotishee / joshee.	Panchangada Brahmana.	Joisa.	Astrologer.	Panchangi.
8.	Temple priests.	-	-	-	-	Pujari / priest.	-
9.	Priest.	-	-	Oja ravam.	-	-	-
10.	Monastery head.	Mathapati.	-	-	-	-	-
11.	Carpenter.	Badagi.	Carpenter.	-	Badiga.	-	Badagi.
12.	Blacksmith.	Kammara.	Smith.	Kabbina Kelaadavanu.	Kammaranu.	-	Kammara.
13.	Potter.	Kumbara.	Potter.	Kumbara.	Kumbhara.	Potter.	Kumbhara.
14.	Goldsmith / Silversmith.	Aksali.	Silversmith.	Aksale.	Pattari.	Village shroff.	Aksali.
15.	Leather worker.	-	-	-	-	Chukler.	Madiga.
16.	Barber.	Kelsi.	Barber.	Kelsi.	Nanda.	Barber.	Nayinda.
17.	Washerman.	Agasa.	Washerman.	Agasa.	Agasa.	Washerman.	Agasa.
18.	Betelnut gatherer.	-	-	-	Kone karchikar.	-	-

Sources: Col1: - Epigraphic Karnataka Vol. XII. Sira Taluks of Tumkur District.

Col2: - Historical sketches of south India. London. 1810. Ed. 1930. Vol. 1, pp. 73-74.

Col3: - Annals of the Mysore Royal Family (A. M. R. F.), part I, Mysore 1910, p. 119. (based on the material available in the Mysore Palace about the middle of 19th century)

Col4: - A Glossary of Judicial and Revenue Terms of British India, 1855, 2nd Edn. Munshiram Manoharlal, Delhi. 1968, p. 52ff.

Col5: - Selection from the Records of Mysore Commissioner's Office (S. R. M. C. O.), Bangalore. 1864, p. 16.

Col6: - Mysore and Coorg Gazetteer. Bangalore, 1877, Vol. I, p. 467.

Note: Data for Col. 1, 3 and 5 are from Chitinis K. N. Glimpses of Medieval Indian Ideas and Institutions, 2nd Ed., Poona. 1961, pp. 196-97.

sufficient for a day.

The duties of the Joisa / panchangi were to mark the proper times for sowing and harvesting and other auspicious moments for rituals and ceremonies etc. This Brahman more often officiated as priest to perform ceremonies of marriage and funeral. For these duties he collected 'Horehullu' and 'Mura batta'. The Madiga or Chuckler provided shoes, ropes, leather buckets and other necessities for cultivation for which he received Ayam, 'Hore hullu' and 'Mura batta'. As the 'Madiga' or 'chuckler' who does not figure in the above table frequently, had according to Rice³⁰⁷ a greater Ayam or allowance than any other Ayagaras, and besides when he supplied ropes and leather for the gardens he received a quantity of grain proportional to the produce. He therefore paid as Jati Manyam, a higher tax on his landholdings than any other village officers did and the Sarkar presented him with a coarse cloth at the time of yearly settlement. He was expected be always ready to serve and obey the orders of the government officers and the village generally employed the Chuckler to show the road to travelers, to carry letters from their village to the next stage. As noted, the chuckler in many places had free gift of lands (inams) for which they paid some gratuity.

While the public duty of Aksale was to measure the government share (Songuru) of the crop (cf Dandidari of north India) and shroff, the money collected in the village as revenue, for which he was paid "Hore hullu" and Mura Batta", for any other private work he took payment. The Kumbar, who was not stationed in every village, was entitled to Ayam in equal proportion as other Ayagars. For the liberty of selling his ware in the market he paid a tax to the government known as Chakrakanike.

The Talwar / Talari, the police officer or Kotwal got besides the Nijayam and Ardhyam and the manyams for his maintenance, and to encourage him to a due performance of his duties, the raiyats bribed him privately at the harvest time to conciliate his favor and protect themselves from inconveniences. He was expected to watch over the safety of the village and was responsible for all things stolen within his jurisdiction. The Nirganti's duty was to attend to the tanks and to shut up when necessary their sluices with stoppers. It was his duty to divide among the raiyats of the village what water was requisite for crop production. For these duties he received 'Hore hullu' and 'Mura Batta' besides Ayam.

307. Mysore Gazetteer, op.cit., p. 478.

Under the Survey and Settlement carried out during the Regulation period from 1863 to 1881 AD the Aya payments in grain paid direct to the Patels and Shanbhogas by the raiyats were abolished and included in the land assessment and a scale of remuneration was fixed in the shape of money payments based on revenue demand, called 'Potagi' in all surveyed areas. As regards the rest of the complement of Ayagars, particularly the village artisans and servants, Rice noted that "it was very seldom that these individuals derived any support from government but the raiyats, of course were glad to assist them in the same way as they did" earlier.

In the above we have summarized Rice's account of the Ayagar system in the former Mysore state. But the north Karnataka districts were under a different administration. Of the 8 districts, we get hardly any information for 3 districts under Hyderabad Nizams domination. As regards 4 districts of Bombay Karnataka, formerly under the Maratha regime till the British conquered them from the Peshwas, we get information from the Bombay District Gazetteer volumes which we present below in Table No. 6.9.1(c 2) detailing the complements of artisans and servants under Barabaluti /Ayagar system, who are identified as Balutidars, particularly in the Bijapur and Dharwar district gazetteers. The Ayagara system in these districts, was found to be influenced by Maharashtra's Barabaluti system, though it contained many artisans and servants common to both the systems, and the system was administered by the village headman. But as the Bijapur District Gazetteer³⁰⁸ noted, "in 1817, on the introduction of British rule, of these officers, the Patil, Kulkarni, Talwar were alone continued as government village servants. The other members of the staff were continued in their hereditary lands on paying a Judi or quit rent and the villagers were left to make what arrangements they chose for securing their services in return for grain and other payments in the harvest time." A later day Gazetteer of Dharwad District³⁰⁹ noted that, "the traditional Balutedars of the old village economy...still survive though in a less recognized form." It further noted that "the system of baluta payments is gradually is disappearing and where it prevails there is marked tendency to make payments in cash rather than in kind."

308. Bombay District Gazetteers, Bijapur District, Vol. XII, 1884, p. 75.

309. Karnataka Gazetteers, Dharwad District, 1959, p. 353.

Table 6.9.1. (C2): Barabaluti / Ayagars of Bombay Karnataka.

Sr. No.	Ayagar.	Belgum District.	Bijapur District.	Dharwad District.	North Canara District.
1.	Carpenter.	Sutar.	Sutar.	Badiga.	Badiga.
2.	Blacksmith.	Kammara / Lohar.	-	Kammara.	Achari.
3.	Leather worker.	Chamara / Samagara.	Chamar.	Mochigar.	Chamagara.
4.	Tanner.	-	-	Dhor.	-
5.	Rope maker.	Mang.	Mang.	-	-
6.	Potter.	Kumbara.	-	Kumbara.	Kumbara.
7.	Barber.	Navaliga.	Nhavi.	Kelshi.	Kelshi.
8.	Washerman.	Parit / Agasa / Madivala.	Parit.	Agasa.	Madivala.
9.	Tailor.	-	-	Shimpiga.	Shimpi.
10.	Goldsmith.	Sonara.	Songar.	Songar.	Panchala.
11.	Astrologer.	Gramjoshi.	Joshi.	Gramjoshi.	Purohita / Joshi.
12.	Lingayat priest.	Jangama.	-	Ayya / Jangama.	-
13.	Temple keeper.	Gurava.	Gurava.	-	Archaka.
14.	Muslim priest.	Mulla.	Mulla.	-	-
15.	Muslim priest.	-	Kazi.	Kazi.	-
16.	Monastery head.	Mathapati.	-	-	-
17.	Holeya / Mahar.	-	Mahar / Holeya.	-	-

Source: Bombay District Gazetteers (ed.) James Campbell.

Belgaum District, Vol. XXI., 1884.

Bijapur District, Vol. XIII., 1884.

Dharwar District, Vol. XXII., 1884.

Kanara District, Vol. XV., Part II, 1883.

6.9.1 (d) A Brief Review of modern Studies:

The village studies by Shrinivas M.N.³¹⁰, Epstein T.S.³¹¹ and Beals. A.R.³¹² in their descriptions of relations between occupational groups do not provide more than only few general remarks or they restrict their presentation to a mere outline of the caste-occupation pattern. In particular they do not refer to the village service system. Shrinivas only mentions “traditional arrangements” and his remarks are too general and too undifferentiated. While there is a lack of village studies in Karnataka giving attention to inter caste relations and the village service system, after Mysore and Coorg gazetteers by Rice (1877) and Hayavadana Rao (1929) the only study to be singled out is by Ishwaran K.³¹³ on the Ayagar system found in his study village Shivapur situated between Dharwad and Hubli.

In a more detailed way Ishwaran deals with the relations-structure within the village. He confronts the North Indian jajmani system with the Ayagar system, which is in contra-distinction to the former embraces all levels of relations, i.e., religious, social and economic between all the strata of the village, which he therefore calls it as a ‘social system’. But as pointed out by Bronger D.³¹⁴, Ishwaran is far from taking a “totalistic” approach to this relations structure in his study village and concedes that the untouchable Holeyas are excluded from the system as far as the religious aspects are concerned. Ishwaran further states that “the Aya system does not comprehend the sum total of economic activities.”

What is given to Ayagaras (recipient of Aya) by the Ayadakula (the family giving Aya) for their services is Aya and the customary Aya is always paid in kind. In his description of the characteristics of the Aya system, Ishwaran presumes a measure of the village harmony, which in this form hardly exists, in real life. As he puts it, the Aya system “is built on the firm foundation of common interests and forces. This is evident during the periods of both crisis and prosperity. If a crisis occurs, the Ayagaras come forward with free services. If there is a period

310. The Social system of a Mysore Village, in *Village India*, (Ed.) Mc-Kim Marriott, Chicago, 1955, pp. 1-35; The Social Structure of a Mysore Village, in *India's Villages*, (Ed.) Shrinivas N. M., Bombay, 1960, pp. 21-35.

311. *Economic Development and Social Change in South India*, London, 1967, pp.353.

312. Changes in the Leadership of Mysore Village, in *India's Villages*, op.cit.,1960, pp.147-160.

313. *Tradition and Economy in Village India*, Allied Publishers, Bombay, 1966.

314. Jajmani System in South India, *Journal of Indian Anthropological Society*, Vol. 10, No. 1, 1975, pp. 14-15.

of more than a normal prosperity the Ayadakulas do not hesitate to give more than is traditionally required”.³¹⁵ However, quoting Rao M.S.A.³¹⁶ that “exploitation... is a general aspect of Indian caste structure which is sharpened by the distance between the jajmans and the kamin castes in the social structure”, Bronger³¹⁷ notes that, without subscribing to Rao’s characterization as a general aspect of the caste structure Ishwaran’s “description of harmony is in fact very far from reality”. Even so, Ishwaran’s exposition of Aya system remains markedly general and does not explain the situation existing with regard to land tenure and tenancy without which a sound characterization of the relations structure in a village, the economy of which is largely dependent on agriculture will be clear. Further, Ishwaran has not clearly answered the questions with regard to the binding character of the relationships, and their stability. He however deals with different types of payments as well as changes in recent times in detail in his chapters on Rights and Responsibilities and on the changing scene.

In this context, it is also necessary to briefly notice Harper’s³¹⁸ much debated “Malnad system” as Malenad is a part of Karnataka State where the Ayagar system of village service prevailed. The economic base of the village Totagadde in Shimoga district studied by Harper, is very much different from the conditions found in the Maidan regions, where village economy is dominated by horticultural cultivation of cash crops (arecanuts etc.) and the lands are solely owned by the dominant caste of Havic Brahmans. As a consequence of this cultivation structure, cash payment plays the most important role in the relations between the Brahman landowners and the artisans and the service castes, while other cultivators who exclusively grow paddy also normally pay in cash. Harper’s presentation of his so-called ‘Malnad system’ has the following characteristics: firstly the relations between the cultivators and service castes are temporary, though not casual, and are easily established and easily broken alliances. Payments for the goods and services supplied by the artisans and the service castes are all made in cash, which keeps on fluctuating and bargaining is vigorous which all these are contrary to the village service system or jajmani.

315. Ishwaran. op.cit., p. 40.

316. The Jajmani System, Economic Weekly, Vol. 13, p. 878.

317. The Jajmani System in South India, op.cit., p. 14.

318. Two systems of Economic Exchange in Village India, American Anthropologist, Vol. 61, 1959, pp. 760-778.

In this context, Ishwaran,³¹⁹ in an obvious reference to Harper, notes that “some have held that in Malenad areas cash crops are grown and hence there is cash economy and this does not permit the aya system.” But referring to his finding in Shivapur, he notes that “both the cash economy and the traditional economy can co-exist.” It is not that there was no community maintained Ayagar system in the Malenad region. As a matter of fact, Wilson enumerated a special functionary “konckarchkar”, the plucker and the gatherer of arecanut as one of the Ayagars. Further Rice³²⁰ has quoted Nijayam above the ghats as four seers and ardhayam as two seers of grain as rates for Ayagars. However commodification of the agricultural produce and the entry of cash might be evidence, certainly, of deterioration of the system of collective maintenance of village servants. By 1959 when Harper wrote, the traditional Ayagar system had already gone into oblivion everywhere, services were privatized and cash wages ruled. And it is not surprising that in the Malenad villages dominated by horticultural produce of areca, coffee and other plantation crops that Harper finds cash payments for artisanal services as wages.

6.9.2 Mirasi System of Village service of Tamilnadu:

(A). Villages and Village Communities:

Generally, in the Tamil country the census village is the revenue village, which is an administration unit, and not a residential village. While the revenue village is the smallest unit having definite boundaries and constituting a convenient charge of a village headman, residential village is a grown up hamlet or a group of hamlets being a cluster of human habitation from which it is separated by fields, waste lands, ditches and jungles. It consists of a number of hamlets of varying sizes linked together by common interest by the concepts of revenue and panchayat among others.

In the raiyatwari areas of the Tamil country, the residential village must, for all practical purposes, coincide with the unit of revenue administration and the British administration never treated the revenue village as a single collection of residential villages. The term revenue village denoted a definite area. While it is usual to agglomerate contiguous residential villages, which are too small to have

319. op.cit. p. 150.

320. Mysore and Coorg Gazetteer, op.cit.

a separate set of village officers, so also it is to subdivide those, which are too large for a single set of officers. Thus the revenue village, generally consisted of several detached villages / hamlets one of which gave its name to the whole village, it never took into account the number of villages / hamlets as it was area based. It was the general tendency in the case of raiyatwari tracts to have villages of large size. But this was modified by the existence, in some districts notably in Chinglepet and Thanjaur, of Mirasi or joint villages, the amalgamation of which with others was administratively inconvenient. In dry areas the revenue villages were larger than in wet villages, while in the Zamindari area the tendency was to form smaller villages. Thus the historically received residential village no longer remained a revenue unit with its own administrative staff of headman, accountant and other administrative and service staff.

In respect of the residential or sociological villages, though the pattern of settlement was generally similar to the nucleated type i.e. distinct cluster of houses surrounded by fields, these nucleated distinct clusters are not called villages, but hamlets. And the revenue village as noted above comprises a number of such hamlets and generally has a large population over 10000. While it is natural to find residential / sociological villages of different types on account of very many factors, the plain country of Tamilnadu appears to present similar characteristics.

Gestalt or configuration wise, instead of flat-roofed houses characteristic of the Deccan, fortified centuries ago and still possessing traces of stone walls and circular watch towers mostly found in the Salem district and in the extreme almost homestead villages in the southern most tip in Kanyakumari area, mudbuilt cottages thatched with Palmyra palm are common. It is also one of the features that each house had its garden and yard and the menials of the village were aggregated in a sort of suburb (ceri) (c.f. Maharwada of the Maratha country) just outside the village.

Tamil villages in general, notes Baden Powell³²¹, are “compact groups and as usual in the Dravidian countries, the whole social organization is complete –the hereditary headman with his ex-officio hereditary holding of land, the village accountant and the regular staff of village artisans and menials paid by grain fees.” This is the brief account of the raiyatwari village communities. In this context, it is important to notice the second important type of the village community namely the joint village community known by the term Mirasi village community peculiar

321. Indian Village Community, op.cit., p. 68.

to the Tamil country comparable to the Bhagdari or sharehold villages of Gujarat or the joint Zamindari villages of upper India noticed earlier. Though the Mirasi villages were not of universal prevalence, they were under privileged land tenures by grants of early rulers or the result of a privileged cooperative colonizing enterprise undertaken under the patronage of Chola princes. Such villages consisted largely of Agraharam / Chaturvedi Mangalam villages held on revenue – free hereditary grants to Brahmins, numerous found in the demesne of ancient kingdoms of Chola and Pandya. These Brahman communities held villages, sometimes undivided in the Samudayam form or sometimes and more usually divided or termed as Arudi- Karai form which is similar to Pattidari of upper India. Further a certain number of Mirasi villages were also held by non-Brahman Vellala castemen in the districts of Thanjavur, Trichanapalli and Tinnevely and also in Madura. But these holdings were not revenue- free. Again the old Tondai-Mandalam area of the country between the north and the rivers Pennai contained the largest most important group of Mirasi villages. However they were found surviving chiefly in the Chingleput and the adjoining districts of Arcot.

It should be noted here the view of Baden Powell³²² that the Mirasi villages, owned by co-sharing families or groups were “the growth of special circumstances and certainly did not represent any universal custom of land holding. Still less is there any evidence or even the tradition of origin that lends any countenance to the idea that they represent survivals of a primeval communal land tenure which indeed that we know of old Dravidian customs would lend us to expect.” However even later historians like Dharma Kumar³²³ term the Mirasi system, originally at least a communal system.

The constitution of Mirasi village was the same as that of the raiyatwari villages, but the village community of the former was restricted only to those who owned land, under Mirasi tenure, including the adjoining waste which constituted an integral part of the property of the Mirasdars, having joint interest in it. A further point of difference, is the absence, like the upper Indian joint village of a real headman. The management of the affairs of the joint body as also that of the village was done by a committee of co-sharers or Panchayat. Neither the cultivating tenants nor the artisans and menials were a part of the village community and they existed in the village with the permission of the co-sharers.

322. Indian Village Community, op.cit., p. 366-7.

323. Land and Caste in South India, Cambridge University Press, 1965, p. 15.

In all Mirasi village lands, the same plan of division of the produce and payment of revenue in kind, which was originally universal in India, was found. The lands yielding produce, as distinguished from the waste and revenue free lands were termed as Varampat. While the produce, if there was no Mirasi class, were simply divided into Melvaram or state share and Kudivaram or cultivator's share after the fees (Merai) of the village servants, watchman etc. were paid out. But when there was a body of Mirasi proprietors, then there were three shares, the Melvaram i.e. royal share, Tunduvaram, Mirasdar's share and Kudivaram, the cultivating occupant's share.

(B) The Land System and Agrarian Structure³²⁴

Two centuries of war had preceded the establishment of the British rule and during the 18th century in particular there had been much dislocation. Villages were frequently abandoned and reoccupied, the old established rights in land were destroyed or falsified. These changes brought to the forefront new landlords who usurped both the rights and the titles of the old. Coping with this chaos, the British administrators, with little or no information available about earlier tenures, classified them according to the method settling the revenue into three categories viz. The Zamindari, Inamdari and Raiyatwari which we will notice briefly.

The Zamindari system was in existence in the Tamil districts of the north Arcot, Salem, Madura and Tinnevely and in other districts there were some Zamindari lands. The Zamindars were the old Rajas or chieftains whose claims were partially recognized, while some others were revenue officials rewarded by Muslim rulers with Zamindari. The Zamindar's main right over his estate was to a share of the produce. In addition the Zamindar, where his power was strong and custom was weak would doubtless make other, more or less illegal deductions from the produce and might even extract forced labour. But he could not claim full rights of ownership. He himself cultivated little, if any, of the land in his Zamindari. Home farms were relatively insignificant. According to custom and usage, the cultivator was entitled to security of tenure, but here again the rights actually given varied. As compared to Telugu zamindaris the Tamil raiyats had firmer occupancy rights.

324. The following account is based on Dharma Kumar's Land and Caste in South India, op.cit.

In pre-British days Inam (Manyam) lands were granted, sometimes for life, sometimes in perpetuity, by kings, by local zamindars or by villagers themselves. Some of them were intended for maintenance of the families of rulers, and other notables. Others were given for the support of public utilities such as schools, bridges, and irrigation works. Some others were given for the past and current services of officials and specialist workers, and lastly they were granted to temples, mosques, Brahmins and the like or to persons carrying out various offices in places of worship.

Although inams carried ownership rights, their main feature was the alienation of land revenue; the grantee could not dispossess the actual cultivator but he could collect the full rent from him and pay the land revenue or quit rent to the government at favorable rate. While large inams belonged to religious institutions, the average size of the inam holding was small and such small inams were numerous. Generally those belonging to village officials and village servants were very small. Temple inams were rented out, while the inams of the village officials were cultivated by raiyats of the village or sometimes by the hired labor.

As noted by Dharma Kumar³²⁵ “the Mirasdar of the Tamil country had more in common with a modern landlord than the zamindar or the inamdar”. But the nature of his rights were obscured by the changes that took place during the instability in 18th century. This favourable form of tenure, carrying with it heritable rights of sale and purchase, had obtained under the Hindu rulers in Tamil areas. The Arabic word Miras replaced the ancient Tamil word ‘Kaniachi’, which literally means hereditary right and this word was used not only for land (landed Mirasi) but also for village offices (office Mirasi). In Bellary district for e.g. the term Mirasdar, in itself conveyed no meaning and people had to be described as Karanam Mirasdar, Barber Mirasdar etc.

The Mirasi system of land holding underwent a number of modifications. It's earliest and the strongest form was ‘passankarei’ or ‘samudayam’ under which lands were not only cultivated jointly but were also held jointly. There was a variation here. Firstly lands could be held separately by each landowner, but the produce was pooled and then re-divided according to shares held by each of them. The only truly separately held lands were house gardens. Secondly, under the ‘Kareiyedu’ system, which was the modification of the above, the lands were temporarily cultivated in separate shares by the co-sharers, being subject to

325. Land and Caste in South India, op.cit. p. 14.

periodic re-distribution so as to give good and bad lands to each in turn. Under both these forms the landowners were jointly liable for government revenue. But in either case the landowner might mortgage, sell or otherwise alienate his rights. In the course of time however, the lands came to be held separately and in perpetuity and this third form of joint ownership was known as 'Arudikarei' in Tamil and 'Phala Bhogam' in Sanskrit. The Mirasi villages held by Brahmins were generally 'Arudikarei' which is the same as Pattidari of upper India. But it was Imperfect Pattidari where cultivated lands alone were permanently distributed and all other rights, including rights to waste land were held in common and the village still remained Mirasi, and the land holdings continued to be expressed in shares. The last form of Mirasi village was known as "Ekabhogam or Ejamana Grama" when one individual held all the lands of the village.

The long life of the term Mirasdar, still in use to date, conferred status upon their bearers. Used initially for a descendent of one of the original shareholders, the term got extended to cover anyone who could claim hereditary right in land, the most important being the right to buy and sell the land itself, and including rights over the common waste lands of the village.

Whether the Mirasdar was the actual cultivator or was he the landlord of the cultivators depended on the size of the holding and the caste of the holder. There were well-established systems of leasing out the land and the distinctions between different types of tenancies were well developed in the Tamil country. There were three systems by which estates were cultivated. The most common was "Varam" system, under which the land was let to tenants who paid as rent a fixed proportion of the gross yield. Occasionally, the land was leased out for a rent fixed in absolute cash terms (Kuthugai), more rarely in kind (Pattam). This system commonly known as the lease system was found generally in dry areas or in areas where the landlord lived away from his land. Finally, there was the Pannai or home farm cultivated by laboring serfs or Pannaiyals. Although this was the least widespread method by the end of the 19th century, this was not the case a century earlier.

Of the several categories of the tenants, the main distinction was between the Parakudi or non-resident tenants and the Ulkudi or resident of the village. The Parakudi's lease usually ran for a year; the Ulkudi frequently inherited the right to occupy the land and could usually mortgage his rights, but could not sell them. He had more secure rights of occupancy but had to pay higher rent. The percentage of the crop paid as rent depended on whether or not the landlord supplied the

stock, seed, cash etc. It also varied with a fertility of the soil.

From the above it is clear that the village in the Tamil country, was not always and everywhere a simple community of peasants, but it was far more differentiated and complex with peasantry and gentry co-existing. In its agrarian structure, rural society was fluid, particularly in its economic categories; but not in its social categories. For instance, a Parakudi or tenant-at-will who was crop-sharer, could hardly be distinguished from an agricultural laborer. Lands were bought, sold, mortgaged and leased out in a variety of ways, particularly in areas where the traditional tenures were fully developed or had disintegrated the least. However, social rigidities set obstructions on these frequent transactions. At one end of the scale Brahmins could not perform several types of manual labor, though the strictness of the prohibition varied. Even so, since a large proportion of land was held by Brahmins, especially in such districts as Thanjavur, this fact itself explains why it was necessary to hire laborers or lease out lands to tenants, even where there were not many very large holdings. At the other end of the social scale, the lowest castes were probably prevented by powerful social sanctions from owning or leasing land. These economic restrictions were matched by social restrictions of pollution etc. Thus, as Dharma Kumar³²⁶ observes, "if one takes a static view of the village, one sees a system in which castes stand in an unchanging relationship to each other; where caste determines each man's social and economic role; where all roles are interdependent in an architectonic whole; where for e.g. land provides a livelihood for those playing different parts the rights and duties of each being strictly defined and none having absolute rights of ownership and possession. Such a view is an essential correction to the old attempts to fit Indian conditions into English boxes ... Looked over a period of a hundred years, the tendency of the system to depart from the ideal becomes clearer, and so does the fact that some groups enjoyed much less social and economic mobility and much narrower range of alternatives than others".

(C). The Mirasi System of Village Service.

In the previous chapter we have presented the demiurgic service system maintained by village community in South India as described by Appadorai³²⁷ in a composite fashion based on the inscriptional evidence upto the 16th century, to

326. Land and Caste in South India, op.cit., p. 32.

327. Economic Conditions in Southern India, Vol. I, op.cit., pp. 264-274.

compare and contrast it as a model with the so called Jajmani system propounded by Western anthropologists. While the accuracy of our comparison may be doubted, it is necessary to note the following about Appadorai's demiurgic model. Firstly the range of inscriptional evidence he has quoted refers to from 12th century to 15th century and mostly pertains to Tamil and Telugu areas, while his inscriptional database for Karnatak is scanty and refers to 14th century. He notes further that in the inscriptions the village servants were called as Ayagars in Karnataka, Kanachigars (Kaniachi-later Mirasi) in Tamil areas and Panimakkal in the Telugu areas, basing himself on the names of different artisans and servants occurring in the inscriptions referring to grants of Manyam lands and Merei fees in kind. He³²⁸ further notes that "we rarely get a detailed description of the duties each (i.e. functionary) had to do in the village, inscriptions being content to leave the subject merely stating that each functionary would do his 'proper duty' and 'live in peace.'" He then quotes Wilks' classic passage of 1810 AD.³²⁹ giving the list of "Barra bullowutee or Ayangadee" and assumes that "we may well believe there had not been essential changes in their duties when the Fifth Report³³⁰ described them or even later when Colonel Wilks gave his classic account in his Historical sketches"³³¹

While Wilks' "Barra bullowutee or Ayangadee" primarily refers to the Karnataka (Mysore) region during the Vijayanagara rule (c 1350-1564 AD) when the system was formalized and extended as a state policy to Tamil country, which we have elaborately discussed in the earlier chapter under the heading Transformation of Systems, Appadorai's identification of Ayagars to Kanachigars on the basis of 14th – 15th century inscriptions of Nellore Chittoor and Tinnevely seems alright. Against the historiographical background of divergent interpretation of the impact of Vijayanagara rule on local institutions such as the Sabhas of the Brahman settlements, the Urs of peasant settlements the suggestion that the Ayagar system had no precedent in Tamil country during times earlier to its imposition during Vijayanagara rule seems rather implausible. Rejecting the above suggestion Burton Stein³³² notes that there were accountants, artisans as well as persons

328. Appadorai, op.cit., p. 266.

329. Historical Sketches of South India, op.cit., pp. 73-74.

330. Fifth Report from the Select Committee of House of Commons, 1812, Firminger's Edn. Vol. 1, pp. 157-8.

331. Appadorai, op.cit., p. 266.

332. Cambridge Economic History of India. Vol. 1., p. 109.

responsible for the regulation and the maintenance of irrigation works. "What was new in Tamil country, but perhaps not elsewhere was the support of these persons and functions by special village tenures" of service and the practice of providing land allotments to village servants. Stein further comments that "the Ayagar system was after all, a poor system for maintenance of services of value to an entire village where land was as relatively as valuable as it was in the better developed parts of Tamil country. Clientage services, or even money payments, would have been the expected form. Yet, the Ayagar system, long prevalent in Karnatak where land was generally less valuable, was introduced into Tamil country during the Fifteenth and Sixteenth centuries suggesting a shift in the relative power of the dominant landed people and those who performed village services".

In respect of South Indian Bara Baluti / Ayagar system Ghurye G. S.³³³ notes that "South Indian inscriptions do not specify the number of hereditary servants and Appadorai's list of 'fairly common' ones over South India in the middle ages, 1000 to 1500 A.C., totals them to nine only; Headman, Accountant, Blacksmith, Carpenter, Potter, Washerman, Barber, Watchman (Talari) and Crops-Guard (Vettiyan). Appadorai³³⁴ adds the priest (Purohit), the astrologer, the doctor and the goldsmith to his list as being 'not so common'. We may conclude that the usual number of hereditary servant of the South Indian villages of Middle Ages varied between nine and twelve."

Noting that "the basis of village administration had existed from time immemorial in the form of 'Village establishment'" and "in almost every Hindu village there are twelve village servants Bara Buloti or twelve men who performed all the needful offices", Mclean³³⁵ gives the following list of the village- 12.

The list given by Baden Powell³³⁶ is the same as above and he notes that "though the various reports recognize the old Hindu Bara-Balute or twelve kinds of village servants these do not exist in this order or number." Comparing the above list with that of Ayangadee / Ayagars given by Wilks (1810) and by Rice (1877) presented earlier, Mclean's list differs only in respect of shroff / Notagara.

333. *After a Century and a Quarter – Lonikand, Then and Now*, Popular Book Depot, Bombay, 1960, p. XXXI.

334. *Op.cit.* p. 266.

335. *Standing Information regarding the official Administration of Madras Presidency*, Govt. Press, Madras, 1877, p.144.

336. *Land Systems of British India (LSBI)*, Vol. III., Oxford, 1893, p. 88.

Village Establishment

Name of the village servant.	Tamil equivalent.
Headman.	Maniyakkaran / Monegar.
Village Accountant.	Karanam / Kanakapillai.
Shroff.	Notagar / Nottakaran.
Water Purveyor for irrigation.	Nirganti.
Village Watchman / Police.	Toti and Taliyari.
Potter.	Kusavan.
Blacksmith.	Kollan / Karuman.
Goldsmith / Jeweler.	Tattan.
Carpenter.	Tacchan.
Barber.	Ambattan.
Washerman.	Vannan.
Astrologer.	Panjangan.

But in many places elsewhere the goldsmith also functioned as shroff. Further comparing with Appadorai's list based on mediaeval inscriptions, we fail to find not only shroff but goldsmith also, who according to Appadorai was not so common. While Nirganti is not at all listed, the astrologer too was uncommon.

In respect of Mirasi villages the village establishment included only servants of the village community and contained no regular official to the government. In his Gazetteer of Tanjore district, Hemingway F.R.³³⁷ gives the following composition of the village establishment.

1. Accountant - Karanam.
2. Water Purveyor for irrigation – Nirganti.
3. Village watchman – Taliyari.
4. Scavenger – Vettiyan.
5. Doctor – Vaidya.
6. Watcher of stray cattle – Tottie.

337. Madras District Gazetteers, Tanjore District, 1906, p. 193ff.

7. Washerman – Vannan.
8. Barber – Ambattan.
9. Carpenter – Tacchan.
10. Blacksmith – Kollan.

The important point to note in the case of Mirasi or joint villages was the absence of the headman and the duties of that office were discharged by the village senate or “Grama Pravartikam”. The Karanam was entirely a private servant of Mirasdars.

In respect of Brahman (Agraharam / Chaturvedi Mangalam) villages³³⁸ the composition of officers was different. Besides the usual set of village servants there were “those who expounded grammar, Mimansa, Vedanta teachers of Rgveda, Yajurveda, Samaveda, the expounder of Rupavatara and the reciter of puranas”. There were others connected with the duties in temples, which were sometimes included in the list of village servants under this head, were “the dancing girl, the door keeper, the dancing master, the drummer, the singer, the conchman, the trumpet decorator, the garland maker and torch barer. Though they were in intimate touch with the village they must be classed as officers connected with the temple – they were under the control of the temple authorities – and can not be technically reckoned as village servants.”

We have already noted the distinction between “landed Mirasi” and “office Mirasi”. The office Mirasi applicable to all categories of village officers and village servants varied in different areas of the Tamil country in an equal degree with landed Mirasi and it prevailed frequently in non-Mirasi villages where the later was unknown, and official Mirasi was established and members of which are known as Kanachigar (Mirasdar).

The emoluments of office Mirasdars³³⁹ consisted of a certain extent of Manyam (rent free land) generally in proportion to the extent of value in villages and of Merei or fixed percentage of the produce of all Varampat land under cultivation. Mereis of all descriptions were received in three ways, viz. 1. In straw before threshing, 2. In grain before measuring, 3. From the government share (Melvaram) after the division of the heap. While certain fees were always received

338. Appadorai, op.cit., p. 270.

339. Ellis, Minutes of Evidence before the Select Committee on the Affairs of East India Company, Vol. III, 1832, Appendix, p. 371-376.

in grain and generally the Karanam and Kavalagar (watchman) had their fees from the government share, but in other respects the custom varied in every village.

As noted earlier, in every district where land or office Mirasi had got established, the former whether held jointly or severally by Mirasdars or by under tenants was without restriction heritable and transferable, but the latter, office Mirasi, was always heritable and in a limited degree transferable. Generally in all cases the property right or privilege which was not heritable was not Mirasi, but Mirasi existed without being transferable.

While the Karnik Mirasi viz. the hereditary right to Manyams, Mereis and other privileges attached to the officer, Grama Karanam or village accountant existed throughout the ancient province known as Tondai Mandalam³⁴⁰ covering the northernmost part of the coastal land territory, and in the provinces South of Kaveri, the Grama Kaval Mirasi of the village watchman existed in the districts north and south of Kaveri from the borders of Nellore to the extremity of Tinnevely. Co-existing with this was the Mirasi of various village servants from the Panjangan to the Vettiyan who swept the village chaultry and cutchery kept the threshing floors in order and performed various other minor services. While these, as Ellis³⁴¹ notes, were accounted twelve, their number and denominations varied in every district except the carpenter ironsmith, washerman and potter who figured in every list, while the bard and school master figured more frequently in Agraharam villages than in 'shudra' ones.

During the British rule the colonial government effected considerable changes in the administrative part of the old village establishment, in the assignment of duties and names of the officials. When the village officers were hereditary as was the case in the most villages, heirs succeeded in the usual course under terms of the law of inheritance which was modified only to the extent of precluding participation in the case of officers other than those of headman, Karanam, Niringanti, Vettiyan and Toti. In the case of above named officers the succession was regulated by the collector.

As regards emoluments, the non-governmental village servants were almost wholly paid by fees (Merei) from the villagers direct. In some cases however

340. Below Tondai Mandalam, was Naduvilanadu and below this in the Kaveri Basin, Cholamandalam and Pandyamandalam included the southernmost part of the peninsula.

341. Minutes of Evidence, op.cit., p. 371-376.

where the government in former days had given Inam (Manyam) lands to such servants, these were continued. No new grants of land or allowances were made by the government to such servants. The governmental village servants were paid in some cases by the enjoyment of government land, rent-free or on a trifling assessment of jodi, in some cases by assignment to them of dues payable by some third person occupying the land, in some cases by contributions of grain or money made by the villagers themselves, irrespective of land revenue and in some cases by salaries direct from the government. Formal alienation of Inam emoluments was rendered illegal.

At the time of revision of the village administrative establishment, the system of payments by Inam (Manyam) from the government or Merei from the villagers was regarded as objectionable and the tendency was to substitute salaries from government from all cases. The Inam rules which were applied from time to time provided for raising the beneficial rate of assessment on Inam lands while withdrawing some of the state claims on land giving absolute ownership in them to the present occupant.

The above re-organization of old village establishment by dividing it into the administrative staff of officers and village artisans and servants and making the former into government officers employed on salaries and leaving the latter to fend their way with the village community, not only drove one more nail in the coffin of the village community organization but also destroyed one of its most vital institution of village service historically received and maintained since centuries.

6.9.3 The Paniwallu system of Village Service of Andhra Pradesh.

(A) Villages and Village Communities.

The present state of Andhra Pradesh (A.P.) is constituted of the Telugu speaking districts of the erstwhile princely state of Hyderabad known as Telangana region. As regard the rest of the state the southern plateau, earlier comprised in the former Madras presidency, the namely districts of Kurnool, Cuddappa and Anantpur and Chittoor known as ceded districts, are referred to as Rayalseema and the rest of the coastal districts comprising Northern Circars are called as the Coastal Andhra. These three areas have presented great regional disparities in economic development, by virtue of varying soil and seasonal and other social and ecological factors with the coastal region being the most prosperous area

with assured irrigation and the other two being backward ones. While the Rayal seema has been a dry tract depending on unreliable rainfall, the Telangana region has represented the most backward tract of the state from the point of agricultural production. Telangana and Rayal seema were predominantly dry farming areas, in the former the cultivation technique was almost primitive and it also accounted for the feudal economy that prevailed historically.

While it is generally true that villages were founded by communities to meet certain elementary needs, the different necessities which caused individual habitations to come together to form a village often gave each village a distinct character. For example in the Rayal seema tract, which had a disturbed history and was subject to frequent plunder and army invasions, the village always developed, for security and defense, in or around a small fort like construction, the relics of which may still be noticed in several villages. On the other hand the villages that were formed purely as a result of the cultivators coming together for the purpose of land cultivation, consisted of a cluster of houses that usually came up near a water-point with agricultural fields adjoining such a village. The habitations that came up in the forest areas were closely huddled together for security, generally forming a continuous row of houses adjacent to each other with common sidewalls. The original settlers in such different villages were land cultivators, cattle rearers and huntsmen. In due course as the methods of cultivation improve and better implements came to be used and standards of domestic life increased, some started specializing in crafts and village artisan communities came into being. Thus the growing habitations assumed more and more settled character and such units were recognized by the state as separate villages for administrative purposes.

While the larger village (Ur) may be generally self-contained with the cultivating and artisan classes living in it, the smaller ones (Palli / Guda) may not contain all the occupational castes and might have had to depend on other settlements for certain needs. However, as elsewhere in the country, on account of caste, the untouchable section of the village population generally lived in a separate cluster of houses at a little distance from caste Hindu quarters. The inhabitants of such cluster depended on the larger village for their livelihood. Otherwise, these villages in general are compact groups and as usual with Dravidian countries, the whole social organization was complete with the hereditary headman, Naidu / Reddy / Peddakapu, with his ex-officio hereditary holding, the accountant Karanam and the regular staff of village artisans and servants paid by grain fees and inam land.

Since it would obviously be incongruous to recognize each such cluster at whatever stage of its development as a separate village, with the advent of organized government the larger villages were recognized as separate villages and smaller ones were combined with the larger village to form a single unit of administration. As the Godavari District Gazetteer³⁴² noted “the number of villages was greatly reduced by clubbing small ones with larger ones adjoining and the establishments were greatly modified being in every case much reduced”. The smaller units were deemed as hamlets (Palli, Guda) of the main village (Ur) and the entire local area comprising the group assumed the name of the larger village. Thus what is known as revenue village in the administrative parlance, came into being. The artificial revenue village delimited on land area basis, was nearly a child of administrative expediency without any consideration of historical or sociological growth of a village. Such a village obviously did not represent sociological unit into which the life of the population of the main village as well as the constituting hamlets were fused.

In some districts³⁴³ particularly Chittoor and Cuddapah, hamlets clubbed in a revenue village were as numerous as 20 or 30 on an average. In some exceptional ones the number of hamlets was as abnormal as 50 to 60, covering a large revenue area and population. On the other hand in some delta districts, particularly in Guntur, quite a different picture presented itself. There were sometimes hamlets (Palli) larger in size than the parent village (Ur) itself but the hamlet had no definite territorial boundary.

While a fully-grown up nucleated village (Ur) is easy to mark off from others and has certain distinctness in terms of its social and economic structure, a dispersed village has no such identity. The revenue village represented, in a sense, a dispersed village with component elements showing differences in terms of socio-economic development. Most of the hamlets (Palli, Guda) may not have a fully developed social structure and may very often be nothing more than an agglomeration of households, depending on supra local help to satisfy their routine requirements. The residents of all hamlets, in the revenue village depended upon the headquarter village (Ur) or ‘Kasba’ for their purchase and sale activities of provision and produce respectively at its weekly bazaar. The Kasba village where various types of Kasbi or skilled craftsmen resided acted as a service center for

342. Madras Gazetteers, Godavari, 1915, p. 178.

343. Census of India 1961, Vol. II, Andhra Pradesh, Part 1A(1), General Report, 1966, p. 93ff.

most of the hamlets, where artisans and servants were located and served the raiyats of all hamlets. Similarly the scheduled caste labor, though residing in a couple of hamlets at some distance served the raiyats of all hamlets of the revenue village. Thus the service relations were all taken care of. However the interrelations between Ur and Palli / Guda were manifold, to be listed here.

The revenue village, which was a product of British land revenue administration, with its single set of village officials holding charge of the entire revenue village and maintenance of common revenue accounts of all its constituent parts, the institution of the Panchayat having jurisdiction over such village treated as a single unit, were all forces forging the unity of the revenue village, together with the emergence of the headquarter village (Kasba) as a bazaar village and the service center. But the old historical and sociological village with its classical features of self-sufficiency and independence and its own set of village officials and village servants was obliterated. The old village no longer remained the revenue unit. While the set of village officials were newly defined to cover the entire revenue village, the old hereditary village artisans and servants were left to fend their way with customers in the village community.

Probably, in many cases the tightly nucleated central Kasba village (Ur) was the old historical village around which the satellite hamlets (Palli, Guda) sprang up over time. That this seems to be the natural process historically received, has been observed by Irawati Karve³⁴⁴ who notes that “in Andhra Pradesh there are clusters of huts a little away from the main village which are called Palli or Guda which are said to belong to an Oor” in the same way as in Maharashtra where the main village is called Gaon and the satellite hamlet is called Wadi. The definition of such a configuration as a revenue village does less harm to the traditional village. But there are instances where, besides the headquarter village the revenue village has clubbed separate grown up villages which for administrative purposes have been treated as hamlets.³⁴⁵ However, in terms village service such villages may be complementary to each other and also depend upon the headquarter village.

Since our interest concerns the traditional village service system of the villages of pre-British vintage and not in the revenue village we will consider below such

344. The Indian Village, in Desai A. R., Ed., Rural Sociology in India, Popular Prakashan, Bombay, Reprint 1984, p. 189.

345. For a good example of this type of clubbing, See Census of India, 1961, Andhra Pradesh, Vol. II, part VI, Village Survey Monograph, No. 41, Vemayakunta, Adalabad District, p.68ff

system only. But before that we will briefly review the land system and the agrarian structure of the pre-British times as an auxiliary to the above.

(B). Land System and Agrarian Structure.

Mclean³⁴⁶ wrote in 1877 that “there is much less information available about the pre-Mohammedan period, partly because it has less characteristic features as it possessed have been almost entirely obliterated by the subsequent Mohammedan and British occupations. The information on the subject is therefore very meagre”. Writing in the same vein earlier in 1819 about the Circars region Russell³⁴⁷ observed that “the length of time has lapsed since these provinces fell under the domain of foreigners, has thrown all ancient usage in to oblivion and entirely precludes any hope of ascertaining what the original rights of the cultivator may have been. The people indeed have lost even the tradition of former customs... the little that remains give good reason to believe that institutions and privileges of the inhabitants were once regulated as those which have been found to have prevailed in the more southern districts.” Even so, with the establishment of the British rule the land tenures then prevailing were classified according to the method of settling the land revenue, namely the zamindari, inamdari and raiyatwari.

The zamindari system in A.P. was confined to the northern districts known as Northern Circars. The hilly parts of the country known as Agency tracts, from time immemorial were parcelled out among chieftains of military classes, who hereditarily exercised uncontrolled jurisdiction within their limits and appropriated the entire revenue subject to the condition of performing military service or other offices at the court of the Raja. In the plains were found a number of petty military Hindu Rajas forming a landed aristocracy. Where Muslim rule was difficult to establish, the claims of the old Rajas or petty chieftains were at least partially recognized. Others were revenue officials to whom zamindari right was awarded by the Muslim rulers. The districts of Vizagpatnam, Godavari, Krishna, Nellore etc. were all under zamindari.

The land in these districts was divided into two classes: Haveli and Zamindari.

346. Standing Information regarding the official information of Madras Presidency, 1877, p. 144ff.

347. Minutes of Evidence before Select Committee on the Affairs of East India Company, Vol. III, 1832, p. 359ff.

While no fixed principles were followed in the administration of Haveli lands, the villages were annually let out to the headman and the government share was commuted to money at the current or average prices. The zamindari lands were leased out for sums that varied from year to year and were seldom punctually paid. The zamindar's main right over his estate was to a share of the produce. Though the cultivator's share in principle amounted to around half the zamindar would doubtless effect more or less illegal deductions from the produce and might even extract forced labor (Vetti). The zamindar himself cultivated little if any of the land and home farms were relatively insignificant. According to custom and usage the cultivator was entitled to security of tenure. But where the power of the zamindar was strong and custom was weak there was no security and the rights actually given varied. Oppression was the order of the day.

Another system of land tenure prevalent in the Agency tracts was Muttadari, where groups of villages were entrusted by the estate holders to influential villagers called Muttadars. They were entrusted with the task of collection of revenue assessment, both in kind and cash, and also the maintenance of peace. The Muttadars were receiving Vetti (unpaid labor) from the villagers. Though they had no proprietary right over the land but as agents to the government they were to distribute arable lands among cultivators and collect rent.

While the Ceded districts of Kurnool, Anantpur, Cuddapah and Chittoor comprising the Rayal seema region were parts earlier of the Nizam's domain and were rayatwari in land tenure an important misconception needs to be cleared about what were known as "Visabadi Gramas" found exclusively in Cuddapah and to a lesser extent in other areas. Visabadi Gramas with settlement of revenue by shares, found in Telugu areas have been termed as "joint villages" by Dharma Kumar³⁴⁸. But Baden Powell³⁴⁹ notes that Visabadi has "nothing to do with joint ownership as it exists in a north Indian village". Referring to the prevalence of Visabadi system in Cuddapah district he notes that "there the villagers club together to manage the whole of the lands and to meet revenue charges on the joint-stock principle, each undertaking a certain portion of area against a fixed fraction of assessment. This voluntary plan was accompanied by a rule that any co-sharer who thought his share was too highly rated might offer to exchange it with another".

348. Land and Caste, op.cit., p.18.

349. Indian Village Community, op.cit., p.141.

Dharma Kumar further notes that in Nellore there were “vestiges of joint village system. Here the Kadims³⁵⁰ corresponded to the Mirasdars of Tamil districts; they were responsible to the government for the land revenue and employed Payakaris or tenants or crop sharers to cultivate land”. But as Mc-Lean³⁵¹ notes, “there are traces however in certain parts, of a right akin to Mirasi right in the ancient land holders whom the Mohammedan rulers called Kadeem. It is known that the large proportion of cultivators if not all of them possess under the old Rajas, the privilege of hereditary occupancy... traces of landed proprietorship are by no means as clear as in Tondai Mandalam or in west coast”. In this connection it must be noted that the Board of Revenue³⁵² in 1818, considered “Kadeems” as “representatives of ancient inhabitants” who “continue to be the principal cultivators in every village in Telingana”. Thus the Kadims, even if they are termed as Mirasdars had nothing to do with co-sharing Mirasdars of joint or Mirasi villages of the Tamil country. The Kadims were a distinct class of superior holders, with hereditary right of occupancy.

Like the Rayal seema districts ceded to the British by the Nizam, the Telangana districts continued to remain under the Nizam of Hyderabad till the state’s reorganization. In the Ex-Hyderabad State over half the territory consisted of Khalsa or Diwani lands directly managed by the state. The land revenue of Diwani areas³⁵³ was collected through contractors called Talukdars or Deshmukhs, to whom territories were farmed out. There were two systems known as Taah-hud-dari and Sarbasta. Under the former the right of revenue collection was given to men of influence in the capital city of Hyderabad and under the latter it was allotted to zamindars on contract basis. At times districts were farmed out to more than one person from each of which a Nazar was collected. There was also another system named Amani under which the government dealt with cultivators directly. The Talukdars were appointed for one or more Talukas. The royal demesne was of the order of one-tenth of the total area of the state, the revenue on which went direct to the Nizam’s Privy Purse, but which was otherwise managed on raiyatwari lines. The rates of land revenue on the remaining raiyatwari lands were one-half of the

350. The Dictionary meaning of “Kadim” as opposed to “Jadid” is “of long standing, of remote origin, ancient”, while the antonym means “lately entertained new or of recent generation”.

351. Standing Information regarding official administration etc., 1877, op.cit.

352. Minutes of Board of Revenue, 1818, Affairs of East India Company, 1832, p. 429.

353. Andhra Pradesh District Gazetteer, Warrangal District, 1976, p. 40.

gross produce on rainfed land, one-third of two-fifths on lands irrigated by wells and one-fourth for valuable crops like sugarcane or on dry lands.

Over one-third of the land was held by members of the nobility such as the former Hindu rulers, chieftains who were assigned jagirs for military and other services of the state or former revenue officials – zamindars, Deshmukhs etc. – or Inamdars. The nobles not only collected the revenue but also had police and judicial authority in their states. Besides they held hereditary offices at the Court. As a result of mismanagement and embezzlement, the state was constantly in debt. The land revenue was farmed out to moneylenders and to Arab and Pathan soldiers who extorted as much as they could from the peasantry. The state was in near collapse in the middle of the nineteenth century till it was rescued by abolishing revenue farming and giving salaries to officials instead and establishing government treasury.

In respect of Telangana villages the Board of Revenue³⁵⁴ observed that “a Telingana village, in regard to its internal constitution and community of interest which unites its inhabitants, is precisely the same as in the Tamil country. Its lands were divided into waste and cultivated, the latter subdivided into Manyams, Khundregas on which only a portion of government revenue was alienated. On Magane or lands cultivated with wet crop, Karoo or government share was taken, the other was Madepaloo or raiyat’s share. On the dry crop money rent was taken. On the condition of due payment of taxes and various office Mirasi fees in the village and other public officers, the exclusive right and hereditary possession was vested in the Kunbi, Reddy and others known as Kadeems or representatives of ancient inhabitants and continued to be principal cultivators in every Telingana village.”

(C) The Paniwallu System of Village service.

We have already noted that the village service system was standardized and uniformly applied by the Vijayanagar authority to Kannada, Tamil, and Telugu speaking areas under their rule. The Telugu term Paniwallu or the Panimakkal of the inscriptions noted by Appadorai³⁵⁵ as synonymous with Ayagars or Kanachigars / Mirasdars of Karnataka and Tamilnadu respectively, literally means, “work people” or “Kam karnewalas” of the North Indian counterpart of Jajman. It includes, but

354. Minutes of Board of Revenue, 1818, op.cit. p.429.

355. Economic Conditions in South India, op.cit. p. 267.

not limited to those castes normally described as service castes. Traditionally there were 12 Paniwallus who were defined as those who provided certain services to the village community as a whole and were rewarded for their services primarily in kind, annually by the villagers to whom they served. The types of people referred to as Paniwallu are artisan and service castes who are “village servants” traditionally defined as comprising the village establishment and had roles to play in the village administration. In their capacity as village servants they were expected to provide services for the entire village community.

The following is the list of types of Paniwallu constituting the traditional village establishment as enumerated by Wilson³⁵⁶.

Village establishment.

Id.	Office.	Telugu term.
1.	Headman.	Naidu / Reddy / Peddakapu.
2.	Accountant.	Karanam.
3.	Watchman.	Talari.
4.	Carpenter.	Vardhaki / Vadrangi / Vadlavadu.
5.	Balcksmith.	Kammari.
6.	Leather worker.	Cheppulu Kutta Vadu / Madigavadu.
7.	Washerman.	Chakili / Chakal Vadu.
8.	Potter.	Kummari.
9.	Barber.	Mangali.
10.	Astrologer.	Panchangi.
11.	Goldsmith.	Kamsali.
12.	Sweeper.	Vetti Vadu.

Russell G.E.³⁵⁷ writing about the zamindari area of Circars region noted that “the village establishment is here much the same as in other parts. The affairs of

356. A Glossary of Judicial and Revenue Terms, 1855, op.cit. Second Edn. 1968, p. 52ff.

357. Minutes of Evidence before Select Committee, 1819, the Affairs of East India Company 1832, Vol. III, pp. 359-370. Also quoted by Chicherov, India, Economic Development in 16th – 18th Centuries, outline of History of Crafts and Trade, Moscow. 1971, p. 24.

the community are managed by the head inhabitant and Curanam. The former seldom enjoys any peculiar advantages or superiorities beyond fellow ryots but the services of the latter, like those of the priest, carpenter, iron smith, potter, washerman, barber, chuckler, vettiyan, watchman, are all remunerated by fees from the gross produce of Circar fields and in some few instances are further recompensed by small portions of privileged lands. The professions of these people are themselves a sufficient explanation of their several duties". He further noted that "British regulations have made the office of the accountant hereditary and the prescription has produced the same effect with regard to others. The barber who holds the Mirasi is the descendent of him who held it ages ago and if it was attempted to turn him out the inhabitants must be content to remain with unshaved heads and beards for, they would find it difficult to meet with a successor who would be willing to brave the prejudices of his caste by accepting the situation thus vacated". Writing about the Manyam (inam) lands and grain fees (Mamool), he noted that "the Manyams of village establishment are landed tenures and although now only to be found in a few places and even where existing, subject for most part to payments of a tax and there cannot be a doubt, they are among the few original rights that have survived the most universal wreck of the ancient institutions of the country". About the grain fees received by these classes he notes, "in the more southern districts, although different in name, are similar in their nature to those which are usual here and other privileges were doubtless once alike, and when it is remembered that a greater portion of these Manyams which have been allowed to continue are in the most jungly and most inhospitable tracts, the fear of driving away the old residents and the difficulty of procuring new settlers would seem to have furnished an interesting motive for this forbearance on the part of local officers and it may readily be believed that the absence of similar motives may have led to their more complete abolition in less wild and more populated tracts".

While Russell noted that "any alienation of land to the head inhabitants is extremely rare and in many taluks altogether unknown", Ellis³⁵⁸ observed that "in the Circars the Mukadam or the chief Reddy has universally an extent of land allowed him rent-free, but as the office is held at the pleasure of the zamindar and such land transferred from incumbent to incumbent, it differs essentially from

358. Minutes of Evidence taken before the Select Committee, on the Affairs of East India Company, 1832, Vol. III, Appendix, p. 371ff.

Kanachi Manyam, so it would appear, the Manyams by Patels in the Ceded districts, for these may be resumed in case of default by government officers, though it would appear that in such a case, the office and the Manyam is usually given to a relation of the family. Ultimately these Manyams are Mirasi in which the anomaly will exist of Kanachi Mirasi in Varpet lands. A Kanachi Mirasi is distinguished by the rent-free lands held by Mirasdars and the fees and the other privileges enjoyed by them”.

As regards Karnik Mirasi, Ellis noted that “the hereditary right to Manyams, Mereis and other privileges attached to the officer, Garama Curnam or village accountant exists throughout the northern Circars and the Ceded districts ... the Mirasi of the inferior officers of police exists throughout Circars and Ceded districts and co-extensive with this is the Mirasi of various village servants from the Panchangan to the Vettiyan who sweeps the village chaultry and cutcherry keeps the threshing floors in order and performs various other minor services.” Similar observations about Telangana are not available from Ellis as the region was under the Nizam. However, the Board of Revenue noted in 1880 that a Telangana village in regard to its internal constitution was very much the same as in the Tamil country.

In the entire Telugu country Inam (Manyam) or tax free land, with only usufructory rights, were allocated by the village headman to village servants in recognition of their services to the entire village community. Inam land was often given to ritual specialists, many of who were non-residents and appeared in the village only occasionally. With the exception of the Brahman, also often non-resident, they performed less important services than other Paniwallu and as such were marginal to the village life. All those recognized as village servants, however, had hereditary obligatory functions to perform for the community which maintained them and acknowledged claims on the resources of the community. But not all Paniwallu were recognized as village servants, constituting the important and essential part of the village establishment. For instance, tailor, weaver, oil presser and even the goldsmith who is listed as a village servant not for his goldsmithy but to assist the state in assaying coins and help measure the state share of the grain heap, because they all were mostly paid in cash, and the mode of their payment was not necessarily annual. Further unlike the village servant Paniwallu they did not attend the service caste assemblies held to allocate households or settle disputes. Since the “village – 12” as village servants were traditionally fixed, others were excluded by definition though they served in the

village.

The Paniwallu of the village service system had the right to exclusive service in the village. This work-right (Miras) was inherited and divided in the same way as any other property among the patrilineal descendents or by other relatives such as father's sister, father's sister's son etc. It could be sold or given by the holder to non-relatives. If the original settler or acquirer died and no adult males were present to carry on the work, a non-related family of the same service caste might be requested to come to the village. Eventually the respective families would divide and allocate to themselves the households served, together with the inam land, the grain fees and other perquisites.

Dirk Bronger³⁵⁹ in his investigation of a village named Tallasingaram in AP, finds that "the right to serve a certain set of families" as noted above "is known in this region as 'Watan'". He further notes that "with regard to the number of patrons these Watan are also very unequally distributed among individual members (Watandars)." This finding calls for some explanation and comment.

Bronger's observation, though subtle and tilted towards "Jajmani", of "the right to serve a certain set of families" or as he later calls the set of families as "mutually fixed set of patrons", makes us to recall E.A. Gait's³⁶⁰ observation in connection with Bihar. Gait has observed that "the barber, the washerman, the blacksmith etc. has his own defined circle (Brit or Shashan) within which he works and no one else may attempt to flinch his customers or jajmans from him on pain of severe punishment at the hands of the caste committee. The exclusive right to employment by the people in the circle constituting a man's Brit is often so well established that it is regarded as a heritable property". However, neither Gait nor Bronger seem to have gone in to the origin of such a set or circle of families of customers, in their observations.

As regards the use of the words "Watan" and "Miras" which are of Arabic origin, are found used interchangeably³⁶¹ in connection with land and village office. The former ordinarily means "native country" or "home", the later stands for "patrimony" or "inheritance". While Watandar is contrasted with "Upari" the casual or non-proprietary servant at will, Mirasdar stands contrasted with "Payakari",

359. Jajmani System in South India, 1975, op.cit. p. 26.

360. Census of India, 1901, Vol. 1, part 1, op.cit., pp. 197-199.

361. Fukazawa H., Rural Servants in the 18th Century Maharashtrian village – Demiurgic or Jajmani system, op.cit. p. 22.

(casual or non-resident) tenant or servant. As noted earlier land Mirasi of the type found in Tamil country did not exist in A.P., except as “Kadeem” right of occupancy, office Mirasi of village servants existed all through.

For any type of village servant the service right including the emoluments that go with it, constituting one Watan or Miras for the whole village gets divided and sub divided over time among co-sharers such that each co-sharing village servant gets allocated to himself a set of customers / patrons whom he serves. But the right and remuneration of each such co-sharer does not constitute a separate “Watan” as Bronger finds it. When a Watan is broken up into shares or Takshimas, those Takshimas do not constitute separate Watans, as according to definition of a Watan, there can not be more than one separate Watan in connection with one hereditary office. Since the Watan property and the hereditary office and the right and privileges attached to it together constitute the Watan, it is inconsistent with the supposition that there can be more than one separate Watan connected with the same office. In view of this Mayer P.³⁶² expresses doubt about Bronger’s finding that the right to serve certain set of families as their “Watan” and simply notes that it “seems clearly different from the Maharashtrian meaning” without explaining in what way it is different, and observes that in such a description “one finds surviving evidence of an earlier obligation to the entire village in the custom of redistributing patrons every 5 to 8 years” between Paniwallu as noted by Bronger³⁶³. This, Mayer likens to the system of land holdings called “Karaiyidu” in Tamil country that existed into the 19th century which meant that the holding shares were separately allotted for a time and then exchanged by rotating the shares, probably with a view to obviate the inequality to which a fixed distribution would be liable.

As regards redistribution, Bronger³⁶⁴ notes that the “mutually fixed set of patrons has only a temporary existence... in a rather regular term of 5 to 8 years the patrons... are redistributed. This redistribution undertaken for the sake of a more equitable distribution of income is carried out by the caste panchayat. As a rule this body negotiates the services and payments centrally for all members. Objections raised by recipients of services will be decided at the village panchayat. Violations of their objections by the patrons are sometimes responded to by

362. *Inventing Village Tradition ... etc.*, op.cit. p. 365, fn. 14.

363. *Jajmani System in South India*, op.cit. p. 29-31.

364. *Ibid.*, p. 29.

strikes". The Dhobis, the Kummaris redistribute their patrons among themselves regularly every five years. However, Benson³⁶⁵, noting that when more than one specialist household is present, the household served are periodically reallocated, in his study village Mallannapalle finds that the barbers³⁶⁶ had not made any formal division of the village within the memory of household heads, as there was no strong compulsion against switching the two serving barbers, whose monopoly was being complained about by the junior ones.

In the light of the above discussion about the custom of redistribution, what happens to the Watan / Miras of the Paniwallu can not be found out. Since the earlier writings of the British administrators do not refer to the custom of redistribution of customers periodically one does not know whether it is pre-British or is an adaptation during the British rule, when the establishment of village – 12 of the earlier system was divided and the administrative component of it was transformed into government employment, leaving the rest of the village service Paniwallus to fend themselves with a village community to take whatever care of their old rights, thus throwing the old established system of village service in disarray. In all probability, the services were communalized and came to be managed by the respective caste councils. In this connection Mayer's contemporary observation quoted above implies that the custom of redistribution is of later origin, providing evidence that they owed service obligation to the entire village which had demiurgically maintained them in the bygone days.

Three centuries separate "the high point of Vijayanagara authority and the establishment of British rule in South India". Historians³⁶⁷ have noted that the post-Vijayanagara period till the British rule was established as "a time of extreme disorder marked by warfare and pillaging." They have also noted that the rise of new centers of power did stimulate economic activity. "There was an obvious increase in cash transactions in agricultural and handicraft production. The gradual emergence of an increasingly monetised economy based on commodity production until the late 17th century and an ever larger proportion of land revenue met by money payments as a result of opening of more interior upland tracts to settle the agriculture were the indicators of progressive development of commodification

365. South Indian Jajmani System, op.cit., p. 248.

366. It is necessary to note here that the British did not enfranchise the Inam land of the barbers and Madigas and left them to the holders as service Inams.

367. Cambridge Economic History, op.cit., Vol. 1, pp. 205 – 212.

of production in a monetized economic framework.” And this development surely produced significant impact on the village service system also.

During the British period the village establishments were thoroughly revised. Earlier, the village servants were paid by certain grain fees and by inam land. The British administration started collecting the customary fees and included them in the revenue assessment and later disbursed to the village servants entitled to them. In 1866 it was decided to levy at the rate of 8 pies per rupee of the land revenue on government lands and a water rate on Inam lands. The Inam lands which had up to then formed a part of the remuneration of the village servants in the establishment where enfranchised at a quit rent. The proceeds of the cess and the quit rent on the Inam lands were set aside to constitute a fund (since abolished) for future payments to the village establishment as newly constituted.

Before these changes were introduced the existing village establishments were revised. The number of villages was greatly reduced by clubbing smaller ones with larger ones and the establishments were greatly modified being in every case much reduced, comprising those necessary for revenue administration. A Munshif (headman), a Karanam, a Talyari and one or more Vetti were allowed to each village. Besides the Munshif and the Karanam, the pay of Talyari and Vetti were uniformly fixed on monthly basis. While the old village Shroffs (goldsmiths) were abolished, the Inam lands of the village Barbers and Madiga-Chamars were not enfranchised but were left to the holders as service inams on the condition that the holders rendered services as barbers and leather workers as customarily required by the villagers. In respect of other village servants (Paniwallu) specific services were usually paid for in grain by the villagers and these payments formed an addition to the income obtained from inam lands, though enfranchised.

